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Hafa Adai!

Saipan Tribune

THE CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER

Volume XXVI, Issue No. 3

www.saipantribune.com | WEDNESDAY JANUARY 6, 2016 | www.facebook.com/saipantribune

75¢

USCIS says 800 CW permits processed

» Kilili calls for emergency regs to allow CWs under review to work for 240 days

By DENNIS B. CHAN
dennis_chan@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Sablan

About 800 applications for contract worker permit renewals submitted at least 90 days before expiration would be processed "by the end of the day" yesterday, according to U.S Delegate Gregorio Kilili C. Sablan (MP-Ind)—with the expectation that most of the 800 applications pending would be approved.

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DUE TO DELAY IN ISSUANCE OF CW PERMITS

Remaining CUC power plant staff facing longer hours

By FRAULEINE VILLANUEVA-DIZON
frauleine_villanueva@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Over 20 workers on the power generation side of the Commonwealth Utilities Corp. haven't been allowed to report for work since Jan. 1, 2016, after their Commonwealth-only work permits expired last Dec. 31 and their continued absence is causing concern for the utilities company.

According to CUC acting executive director Gary Camacho, the situation is very concerning and challenging for CUC.

"It is having an impact and we're really hopeful to get these people back to work and get back to our normal operations and address the issues that we want to address," Camacho said.

"It's challenging. The schedule, people are working longer shifts," he added.

Power generation manager Richard Cano said they can't keep up with the work load at the power plants.

"There's so many pending maintenance work and we cannot cope up with the work because we have to do the most important ones," Cano said.

On Tuesday, CUC and 18 workers sued Homeland Security Secretary Jeh Charles Johnson and other federal offi-

See CUC on Page 4

DHS secretary, other USCIS officials oppose TRO request

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Homeland Security Secretary Jeh Charles Johnson, Immigration and Customs Enforcement Director Saarah Saldana, and U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services Director Leon Rodriguez submitted yesterday their opposition to the request of the Commonwealth Utilities Corp. and 18 of its foreign workers for a temporary restraining order that would allow these CW-1 workers to immediately return to work.

U.S. District Court for the NMI Chief Judge Ramona V. Manglona heard the TRO matter yesterday.

When *Saipan Tribune* left the courtroom at 6:25pm, CUC counsel James Sirok was still arguing the position of CUC and the 18 workers.

CUC and the 18 foreign workers, through Sirok, filed a lawsuit on Monday against Johnson, Saldana, and Rodri-

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CONTRUCTION ONGOING

DENNIS B. CHAN

Construction is ongoing for Best Sunshine International, Ltd.'s 14-story Grand Mariana casino resort, targeted for completion in late 2016. It is Phase 1 of the Hong Kong-based company's $7.1-billion integrated resort project on Saipan.

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LOCAL

Alexis Palacios Cabrera's story of returning home to the islands is about a personal goal and passion of giving back to her family and community.

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BUSINESS

It turns out that thanks to a glut of crude, even tension between two big oil-producing countries isn't enough to drive prices higher.

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LIFE & STYLE

It started on June 11, 2002, with a couple of unfamiliar hosts posing in an empty theater and making an overblown declaration to TV viewers.

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Local

Businesses doing everything to remedy delay in CW permits

By DAISY DEMAPAN
daisy_demapan@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The last few days have been a trying time for many businesses in the CNMI as they push for U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services to approve much needed Commonwealth-only worker renewals. *Saipan Tribune* spoke with a few human resource managers expressing similar sentiments on the delayed process.

Hyatt Regency Saipan human resource director Josephine Mesta expressed that only a few workers are awaiting renewal but that they've been getting approval from USCIS since yesterday due in part to their timely submissions. Hyatt Regency is one of the few companies boasting a high percentage of the certified local workforce, which is about 74 percent, as a long-term commitment that has prevented drawbacks from CW delays.

Bridge Capital HR manager Carmen Hasselback says that only one critical employee is awaiting renewal but that the employee has been out of work for a month, a wait that is much longer than many workers whose permits expired last Dec. 31.

Triple J Enterprises HR director Frank Ada stated that they are trying to address the situation and that the company is doing everything they possibly can in the process.

Emphasizing the indefinite closure of Truong's and other key positions in the company, Ada says, "we are talking about our skilled workers and experienced managers who are not able to earn any wages and we are hoping to get some support. We are working as hard as we can to try and get these workers back. We have stopped all workers that have expired on Dec. 31 until we get approval," adding that roughly 50 employees are affected under Triple J Enterprises.

Saipan Chamber of Commerce president Alex Sablan states that the business community did anticipate a delay because people weren't getting their notifications timely.

Sablan described the situation with USCIS as the perfect storm saying that U.S. immigration slowed down their process after the United States government approved a new cap of 12,999 foreign workers under the transitional worker program.

He further added that USCIS is also undergoing a filtering process to figure out a new quota as the end of the transition program in 2019 nears.

"USCIS is under a time crunch. It is our understanding that all the new developments are picking up the remaining 1,600 permits. There's a sheer backlog at USCIS and it is understood that they're understaffed in California. It was originally hoped that the regulation for 240 days was to be approved but it hasn't," he said.

The proposed regulatory amendment to the current 120-day tolling period would've allowed CWs to continue working past their expiration date but the amendment is still pending since May 2014.

"We feel this would be a quick fix regarding our economy. It's affecting a lot of businesses. We're walking into restaurants [who are understaffed] and it's very hard on employers right now," he said.

When asked about whether employers are doing all that they can to hire more locals to mediate the issue, he says, "in this day and age, employers are doing all they can to hire local workers and we're seeing more [in the workforce] because of an improved economy. It's easier and less frustrating to hire the local workforce instead of going through the CW process. For those people that want to work and are gainfully employable, they need to figure out what their interests are and need to keep trying."

Sablan states that the impact is across the board for CNMI businesses as over 2,500 CWs await renewal, "businesses don't hire people just to hire people. There's a necessity that needs to be filled and they're contributing to the company. I'm going to go out on the limb and say that the vast majority of businesses are affected by this."

'Great effort to hire local'

Although the CNMI Department of Labor no longer controls immigration matters anymore since the federal immigration takeover, Secretary of Labor Edith Deleon Guerrero reiterates that employers are still encouraged to go online to the USCIS website to check their status.

"We issued umbrella permits way back in 2009 to 2011 prior to transitioning into the CW visa categories under USCIS. To anticipate this, we certainly did not because we don't control the process… [but] employers still must follow U.S. and local employment laws. There is a great effort [by employers] to recruit qualified U.S. workers and at the same time we are monitoring to make sure that entry-level work can be performed by status qualified individuals," she said.

She adds that there's a lot of relational communications in terms of request for evidence when employers are petitioning to hire foreign workers, illustrating that the 2,800 CWs who weren't renewed in a timely fashion are needed to support the CNMI workforce.

"When USCIS requests for evidence for a JVA certification, we only issue certification if we can validate that there is no qualified U.S. worker," she said.

Case in point, if an employer asks for certification of 10 JVAs for waitressing positions, and there are at least five U.S. qualified individuals available in the labor pool, CNMI Labor will only certify five JVAs to prioritize U.S.

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$3M annual casino regulatory fee paid out

By DENNIS B. CHAN
dennis_chan@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Department of Finance has opened an account for the Commonwealth Casino Commission's casino regulatory fee fund and the $3 million fee paid out by Imperial Pacific International (CNMI LLC), which does business as Best Sunshine International Ltd., Best Sunshine Live, and the Grand Mariana Resort, has been deposited, according to the commission's executive director Edward Deleon Guerrero yesterday.

The regulatory fee is a flat fee that covers the licensing fees for casino employees, casino key employees, and fees for slot machines and gaming tables. Before the flat fee was established through amendment to casino law late last year, the fees were assessed individually.

"The $3 million is an amount we have determined necessary to have casino commission fully operational," said Guerrero an interview yesterday. The fee will help fund commission's administrative, enforcement and regulations, and audit and compliance divisions.

Thirty-five full-time equivalents were also authorized by casino law amendment last year.

Guerrero said they are anticipating an additional eight new positions, with one replacement, for a total of nine new openings to be announced relatively soon.

He said these positions would be announced "in anticipation of the Grand Mariana" casino resort, currently undergoing construction in Garapan for a targeted completion date of late 2016.

The eight new positions include a certified public accountant for the position of director of audit, an account, a CMS administrator, a financial auditor, an inspector, to permit and licensing clerks, a special agent, and an enforcement agent.

Guerrero said they are also tentatively targeting Feb. 22 to March 4 for a workshop conducted by the International Gaming Institute of University Nevada of Las Vega Campus on island, with an anticipated maximum 45 participants.

The commission is aiming basically aiming to further train every able body at the casino commission, Guerrero said, with invites to casino regulators on Tinian and Rota as well.

Guerrero also said they are planning an official grand opening for the casino commission's office in Springs Plaza, Gualo Rai, on March 4, the close of the workshop.

Inos funeral on Tuesday

By DENNIS B. CHAN
dennis_chan@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Late governor Eloy S. Inos' funeral will be held next week Tuesday, the Office of the Governor confirmed near press time yesterday. There will also be a Monday viewing of Inos' remains for family, off-island dignitaries, cabinet member, and other government officials at the Borja Funeral Homes.

Press Secretary Ivan Blanco provided an update on Inos' arrival and funeral yesterday afternoon.

On Friday, Jan. 8, at 3:10pm, Inos' remains will arrive at the Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport. This will be followed by a funeral cortege to Borja Funeral Home, and a viewing of Inos for family members only.

On Monday, Jan. 11, from 1pm to 3pm, a private viewing for visiting heads of state, government officials, cabinet members, and administration staff will be held.

On Tuesday, 7am, the funeral cortege will depart Borja Funeral Home for Mt. Carmel Cathedral at 7am. At 7:30am, a Responso and Holy Rosary will be held, followed by public visitation and respects at 8am. At 2pm, there will be a viewing and last respects for immediate Inos family.

At 3pm, a mass of Christian burial—with seating for dignitaries arranged—will be held.

Inos died of apparent complications from diabetes last Dec. 28 in Seattle, Washington.

BUSINESSES

From Page 2

qualified individuals for hire.

The shortage of qualified U.S. workers then depends on the position, she says. The DOL is currently working with Department of Commerce to survey the current market to get a better picture of the unemployment rate and viable workers. The last survey was a broadband survey that mimics 2014 census data, which doesn't paint a true picture of qualified workers, she adds.

Although businesses are required to comply with the employing of at least 30 percent of qualified U.S. workers, the minimum called for by CNMI State Employment laws, nothing prohibits the CNMI Department of Labor from increasing or enforcing beyond the minimum 30 percent as it is not indicative of the available U.S. workers in the labor pool.

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Junket operator applications for Saipan casino out

By DENNIS B. CHAN
dennis_chan@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Commonwealth Casino Commission has approved regulations and guidelines for junket operators who are expected to bring high rollers to gamble at the Saipan casino. Applications for junket license have been finalized and released to Best Sunshine International, Ltd., the owners of the Saipan casino, and other parties, commission executive director Edward C Deleon Guerrero said yesterday, and they are anticipating applications soon.

It's believed that for a casino to be truly successful on Saipan, Tinian, and Rota, the CNMI would need extensive marketing effort—or in the gaming world—a good well-managed, well-regulated junket operations.

"Because they would be the one bringing in the players," Guerrero told *Saipan Tribune* yesterday. "These are the large VIP players."

"The success of Best Sunshine, or the [Tinian] Dynasty, or Alter City [Group] or any other" casino in this part of the world is "through this program, the junket," said Guerrero. "Basically, they are the travel agency going around the world to get VIPs to come to Saipan."

These junket operators could easily bring gamers to Manila, Singapore, or other gaming areas around the world, Guerrero said, but if they choose Saipan, both Best Sunshine and the CNMI has to make this experience possible.

In an interview yesterday, Guerroro noted one of the difference between the Macau junket operations and the one Best Sunshine would have.

"In some places in Macau, the junket operator takes over the VIP room," said Guerrero. "They actually in a sense run the casino. Here, we do not allow that. The junket operator cannot take over a VIP room—it would have to be Best Sunshine and Best Sunshine's approved and licensed dealers and pit boss that are operating the casino."

"We do not allow any outside entity to run the casino, or the VIP room, other than the licensee," added Guerrero. "That's one difference between us and Macau."

In ushering the casino industry and the junket operators—seen as the industry's gaming middlemen—the Commonwealth could look to two stark contrasts in how junkets are run, in Singapore and Macau.

Macau casinos have become extremely reliant on the VIP high-roller sector, which accounts for more than 70 percent of revenue, according to Reuters "Factbook" in recent years. VIP junket operators, also known as VIP room promoters, act as facilitators for Macau's billion-dollar casinos, guaranteeing a certain amount of revenue from China's wealthy gamblers, luring them with free accommodation, travel and other perks in Macau, the only place in China where casino gamble is legal.

Macau's six licensed casino operators—Wynn Macau Ltd. (1128.HK), Sands China Ltd (1928.HK), Galaxy Entertainment Group Ltd (0027.HK), SJM Holdings Ltd (0880.HK), MGM China Holdings Ltd (2282.HK), and Melco Crown Entertainment Ltd (MPEL.O)—provide gaming facilities, dealers, chips, and a monthly commission to VIP junket operators in return for a minimum guaranteed rolling chip turnover per month.

Singapore, however, according to a Reuters report last April, wants nothing to do with the often questionable gaming middlemen who proliferate in Macau, in making its decision to cut out junkets. The gambling houses in Macau get around China's currency controls by relying on so-called junket operators to extend credit to mainland high rollers, a business model that has been linked to organized crime groups known as triads, says Steve Vickers, chief executive officer at risk consultant Steve Vickers & Associates.

BIRTHDAY SHOUTOUT

Edreanne Joyce Corrales celebrated her 7th birthday yesterday, Jan. 5, at Shirley's Coffee Shop Susupe. Happy birthday from your loving family.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

USCIS

From Page 1

"A small number will require more evidence from the applicant," Sablan said in a statement yesterday, after a phone call with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service director Leon Rodriguez. "And an even smaller number will probably be denied, as is usually the case," Sablan added.

In early December, about 100 applicants—concerned about processing delays—came to the Sablan's congressional office. Most were successfully resolved. However, while working on those cases, USCIS informed Sablan that there were actually 2,800 of applications backlogged at the processing center in California—with 800 filed 90 days before expiration and 2,000 filed late.

"That was unacceptable to me," Sablan said in his statement. "And we are already seeing the negative effects of that backlog with businesses having to close or cut back hours."

Sablan has also written to Rodriguez to ask for federal rules to be finalized to allow certain visa-holders, including contract workers, to work while their permits are being processed, Sablan told *Saipan Tribune* in an interview yesterday. These rules—published for comment in the federal register in mid-2014—have been "19 months in the making."

Sablan explained that these regulations would allow an employee to continue to work up to 240 days while their petitions are being adjudicated—until approval or denial or a request for more evidence is issued.

"But that has not been finalized," Sablan told *Saipan Tribune*. "[Rodriguez] doesn't have an answer for me on that one yet."

"It will be finalized, hopefully, sooner rather than later," added Sablan.

In their phone call, Rodriguez also assured that "what's going on now" would not be happening come Dec. 31 or Jan 1 next year, Sablan said.

Sablan's office has been working daily through the holidays to make sure that USCIS puts extra people to work processing those applications and look at other actions the agency can take to help keep businesses open. Rodriguez called yesterday to give Sablan an update and his "personal commitment that he is taking action and that we will see results today."

The delay in contract worker renewals was felt by businesses all over the Commonwealth. It has affected over 20 percent of the CW workforce, as there are over 10,000 contract workers in the CNMI. For one, the delay has been reported to affect roughly 50 employees at Triple J Enterprises, which owns such restaurants like Truongs, Tony Roma's, Capricciosa, among other businesses. Also, at least 10 contract workers—from China, Korea, and the Philippines—at the popular tourist shop, Star Sands Plaza, have also been affected, with most of these being at the managerial level. Some eligible workers have been given extended work hours, *Saipan Tribune* learned yesterday.

CUC

From Page 1

cials over the delayed renewal of their permits and also asked the federal court to issue a temporary restraining order that would allow these them to immediately return to work.

Alex Tagaza, among those who filed, said they need to go back to work.

"We really need to go back to work immediately because we have responsibilities there at the power plant," Tagaza said in Filipino.

There are 94 workers at the power plant including those who currently are not working because of their pending CW-1 permits, however, CUC stressed that those who are not able to work are much needed highly skilled individuals in various areas such as operations, technical, electrical, mechanical, and auxiliary.

Camacho said the workers are dealing with equipment which are about 25 years old and above.

"It's very, very concerning because the vast amount of work and the limited amount of manpower on top of expertise lost in this process," Camacho said.

"By not addressing those areas, it's causing concern, because they are short by 21 highly-qualified personnel from the electrical, mechanic, and the operations sections," he added.

Camacho said they want to provide safe and reliable power to the community and don't want to impact the water and wastewater systems because of "potential interruptions" to their power supply should there arise some mechanical failures to the power plant.

"We need this number to be able to address, on top of who we currently have at the power plant now, the wonderful personnel that we have there, to be able to assist us in continuing to monitor and address the day-to-day operations of our power plants," Camacho said.

Last year, CUC also experienced the same problem in renewing their CW permits for at least some of the same batch of workers. According to legal counsel James Sirok, a handful of workers also "stopped working for a period of time."

"While there was an effect on the operations at that time, it wasn't like the effect that we have now because of the amount of workers involved," Sirok said

DHS

From Page 1

guez over the delayed renewal of their Commonwealth-only worker, or CW-1 permits. CUC also asked the court to issue a TRO.

Sirok requested the TRO allowing the affected CW-1 workers to return to work and prevent the defendants from taking any adverse action against these workers until a final decision is made on the merits of CUC's and the workers' claims in their complaint.

Assistant U.S. attorneys Jessica F. Cruz and Mikel W. Schwab, and Office of Immigration Litigation attorney Sarah S. Wilson, appeared by telephone at the hearing as counsels for defendants Johnson, Saldana, and Rodriguez. Cruz and Schwab were in Guam, while Wilson was in Washington, D.C.

In defendants' opposition to the TRO, Cruz and Wilson said CUC only filed its petitions for extension of the workers' status last Dec. 28—a mere three days prior to the expiration of their nonimmigrant status.

Cruz and Wilson said in spite of CUC's lackadaisical approach to its alleged crisis, defendants offered CUC's counsel Sirok a reasonable resolution: submit a request to expedite the petitions that sets forth the circumstances supporting their need for immediate action and defendants will move CUC's petitions to the front of the queue.

Cruz and Wilson said Sirok declined this sensible solution and, as a result, is facing "a manufactured crisis."

Now, Cruz and Wilson said, CUC and the workers request a TRO that seeks to substantially alter—rather than preserve—the status quo to immediately facilitate the extension of legal status to individuals who have not yet been determined to be eligible for continued status.

As such, the lawyers said, plaintiffs' motion must be denied absent a heightened showing that CUC and the workers are likely to succeed on the merits and that they will experience particularly egregious irreparable injury unless their motion is granted.

Cruz and Wilson asserted that plaintiffs rely on an unprecedented legal theory that purports to treat time-limited and numerically-capped nonimmigrant visas as "licenses for a continuing activity."

Such a holding, the lawyers pointed out, would be the very first of its kind, in direct tension with decades of Supreme Court precedent recognizing the Executive's plenary authority in the realm of immigration policy, and would conflict with the Immigration and Nationality At provision granting the Secretary authority to prescribe the time and conditions for the admission of a nonimmigrant.

At the hearing yesterday, Sirok called to the witness stand CUC acting executive director Gary P. Camacho and CUC power generation manager Richard Cano.

Camacho testified, among other things, that the affected foreign workers are all highly skilled personnel assigned at the power plants in Lower Base.

Camacho disclosed that Typhoon Soudelor affected power plants' exhaust system as it took 22 days to dry up the water brought by the typhoon.

Camacho said the affected workers are key components of the ongoing restoration at the power plants because of the typhoon's damage.

The acting executive director noted that in 2015, there were a number of typhoons so between now and the summer, it is CUC's opportunity to "attack" the damage and conduct preventive maintenance.

"We can't replace them (affected foreign workers) because of the skill level that they possessed," he said.

Camacho said without their expertise, there will be a direct deterioration of service to CUC's customers and the general public in the CNMI.

Camacho also disclosed that CUC "lost" one power engine unit the other day and that they need manpower to get that unit working.

Cano, on the other hand, explained how CUC's power plants' operations have been severely affected due to the foreign workers' work stoppage.

Cano cited an example the downed 14 units of exhaust due to Typhoon Soudelor. He said the repair was stopped because the needed workers could not work.

Asked when he believes that the affected workers should go back to work, the manager replied, "the soonest the better. Tomorrow the better."

Sirok argued, among other things, that the Federal Administrative Procedure Act allows a CW-1 worker to continue to work after the expiration of the CW-1's validity period during the agency's review of a timely filed petition for a CW-1 renewal/extension of stay.

Passport applications only for PH mobile mission on Jan. 12-15

By FRAULEINE VILLANUEVA-DIZON
frauleine_villanueva@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Philippine Consulate General in Guam will be having their first mobile consular mission of the year next week.

According to Philippine Honorary Consul Glicerio Arago, the mobile mission will take place from Jan. 12 to 15 at the Pedro P. Tenorio Multi-Purpose Center in Susupe.

Unlike past missions, the team from Guam will only be processing passport applications this month.

Over the four-day mission, only up to 400 passport applications will be processed due to the capacity limits of their passport processing equipment

Prior to the mission, Arago said they will be conducting a registration at the TSL Plaza parking lot on Sunday, Jan. 10 from 9am to 3pm.

Those who are able to register will be assigned a specific date and time slot. The PCG reminds those who will register to appear during their scheduled processing time or their slots will be cancelled and will have to register again for the next mobile consular outreach.

The following are the requirements for the renewal of green-colored Philppine passports: accomplished ePassport Application form, photocopy of data page of passport, original passport, and payment of ePassport Fee ($60).

For brown or maroon-colored passports, applicants should also bring a photocopy of their birth certificate in addition to the above mentioned requirements.

For lost passports, applicants should also provide a police report and a notarized affidavit of loss ($25) along with the requirements and would have to pay a Lost Passport Fee of $90 for the green or maroon passport or $150 for the ePassport.

Guam students build underwater robots

HAGATNA, Guam (AP)—A group of students in Guam is learning about the connection between marine robotics and environmental sustainability by creating their own underwater robots.

The group of 20 students, ages 15 to 17, is participating in a two-week sustainable technologies clinic put on by Guam Community College. The students tested their homemade robots Wednesday at an aquarium in Tumon, *The Pacific Daily News* reported.

"I'm teaching them about marine sustainability and not just teaching them why corals are important, but teaching them, 'Hey, there's a job out there,'" said the program's director A.J. Sunga, a science professor at the college. "'You could build robots to survey the land. You can build robots to search and rescue someone. You can build robots to do the science and help in sustainability.'"

The robotics course is part of a six-day clinic on sustainable technologies. Students learn about sustainable design concepts for fossil fuels, photovoltaics and wind energy.

Sunga led students as they drew up their own blueprints, cut PVC pipe and worked with a motor and control to make the robots.

"All I did was give them motors and a control, and I gave them uncut PVC pipe," Sunga said. "Then I said, 'OK, let's go and start cutting.'"

Students worked on the robots in groups of four and after one full day of designing and building, they tested their models in a swimming pool. On Wednesday, the students headed to Underwater World to put their creations to the test in an underwater obstacle course at the tunnel aquarium.

One team, called H20, used a three-blade propeller, motor and floats to keep their robot buoyant enough to move along the course.

"The simplicity really helped the buoyancy," said Fredlyn Rose Lumogda, a member of the team and senior at Tiyan High School. "If it were any more complex, it would have just sunk."

Each team was timed as they guided their robots between small yellow buoys at varying depths. A few teams made it through the entire course, but design flaws prevented some robots from getting past the first few obstacles.

Lumogda and Ann Aleise Kealihek, a home-educated eighth-grader, said they were proud of their team's robot for completing the course.

Linda Usita, a parent who attended the underwater course, said she is happy her daughter could participate in the clinic.

"It's nice to be able to be with a group and do something meaningful and open their minds to what type of jobs and careers are there," Usita said. "In Guam, we just depend on the ocean so much so I think it's a great opportunity."

NMC offices closed today

Northern Marianas College employees will be participating in an all-day, on-campus professional development activity today, Jan. 6. All NMC offices will be closed on this day to ensure maximum employee participation.

We apologize for any inconvenience caused. For any campus emergency, please contact NMC Security at 237-6800. For more information about upcoming events, visit www.marianas.edu. ***(NMC)***

CUC rate consultants on island

By FRAULEINE VILLANUEVA-DIZON
frauleine_villanueva@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Rate consultants of the Commonwealth Utilities Corp. are now on island and will be discussing several matters with the utilities company.

"They have arrived and we'll be working on reviewing a few things throughout the next week or so," acting executive director Gary Camacho told *Saipan Tribune* yesterday.

The consultants from the company economist.com from the U.S. mainland are catching up with some of the few things with CUC, according to Camacho.

Camacho mentioned that the incentive rate and "a few more items" will be discussed with their consultants.

Camacho said they are still developing the incentive rate which will be for their large accounts.

"It's a rate that's going to be put together to give incentives to these large commercial accounts to go from being off the grid to on the grid to CUC," Camacho said.

In an earlier interview, CUC chief financial officer Matthew Yaquinto mentioned that the 10 percent cost-share of CUC from the Typhoon Soudelor recovery might be passed on to consumers and part of their rate case.

CUC needs to pay the Commonwealth Development Authority for what they owe them will also be part of the discussion with their rate consultants.

MICHAEL A. WHITE, ESQ. F0122
THE LAW OFFICES OF MICHAEL A. WHITE, LLC.
POST OFFICE BOX 5222
SAIPAN, MARIANA ISLANDS 96950
TEL.: (670) 234-6547
FAX: (670) 234-9537

ATTORNEYS FOR Plaintiff

IN THE SUPERIOR COURT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

THE FINANCIAL & INSURANCE SERVICES GROUP, INC.,	:	**CIVIL ACTION NO. 11-0131**
Plaintiff,	:	
-v-	:	
LUCIA BORJA PALACIOS, Defendant.	:	

FIFTH AMENDED NOTICE OF SALE

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that, pursuant to an Order issued by the Court in this matter on April 10, 2012, I will sell, at public auction, to the highest bidder, on the terms and conditions set forth hereinbelow, all of the right, title, and interest of Defendant in and to the following property: Lot NO. 218-2-5, situated in As Teo, Saipan, Northern Mariana Islands, more particularly bounded and described as follows:

Beginning at a corner which is designated as Corner No. 1, having plane rectangular coordinates of 53,203.65 meters north and 66,755.91 meters cast of the Mariana Islands district coordinate system of 1956.
Thence N 13° 35' 00" E, 13.18 meters to Corner 3;
Thence S 80° 13' 00" E, 65.95 meters to Corner 4;
Thence S 09° 47' 00" E, 28.85 meters to Corner 5;
Thence N 80° 13' 00" W, 66.53 meters to Corner 1;
the point of beginning

Date, Time, and Place of Sale. The sale will be held on Friday, January 29, 2016, at the hour of 1:30 p.m., at the Law Offices of Michael A. White, LLC, Joeten Center, Susupe, Saipan, Northern Mariana Islands. The sale will be open to the general public.

Terms and Conditions of Sale. The Terms and Conditions of Sale may be obtained from the undersigned, either prior to or at the sale. These terms and conditions shall govern the conduct of the sale.

DATED, this 23rd day of December, 2015:

/s/ MICHAEL A. WHITE, Auctioneer

NORTHERN MARIANAS HOUSING CORPORATION
P.O. BOX 500514, Saipan, MP 96950-0514
Email: nmhc@nmhc.gov.mp
Website: http://www.nmhcgov.net

NOTICE TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC

Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program

(December 31, 2015)

Pursuant to the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) recently published FY 2016 Fair Market Rent (FMR), which took effect on December 11, 2015, the Northern Marianas Housing Corporation (NMHC) wants to respectfully inform the general public that there has been a decrease in the FY 2016 FMR. As a result of this decrease, NMHC's FY 2016 Payment Standards shall be effective for all FY 2016 New Admission and Other Change-of-Unit (Unit Transfer) certifications that occur after December 11, 2015. Based on 24 CFR 982.505, for participants undergoing an annual recertification, the FY 2016 Payment Standards shall take effect for the family beginning at the effective date of the family's second regular reexamination following the effective date of the decrease in the payment standard amount.

Thank you and please direct all questions regarding this public notice to the following individuals:

1. Saipan Office – Telephone Numbers: 234-6866 or 234-9447
   - David Chargualaf, PHD Manager
     email: phdmanager@nmhcgov.net
2. Tinian Field Office – Telephone Number: 433-9213
   - Frances Diaz, Tinian Field Office Representative
     email: tiniannmhc@nmhcgov.net
3. Rota Field Office – Telephone Number: 532-9410
   - Arvin Ogo, Rota Field Office Representative
     email: ropnmhc@nmhcgov.net

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• Hillside properties

ISLA REALTY MANAGEMENT CONTACT & LOCATION:
Herman's Modern Bakery Office
Building 2nd Floor Unit 5 Tun Herman Pan Road
Contact: 670-483-1726 or
Email: islarealtysaipan@gmail.com

Following Information/Documents Required
Property Map/As Built Map/ Total Land Area
If available for existing building showing exact location & building details
Owner Title Information
Owner Asking Price

Drug case vs man allegedly wanted by Interpol dismissed

Superior Court Associate Judge Joseph N. Camacho yesterday dismissed the criminal case against Li Qiran, a 29-year-old Chinese man who allegedly found in possession of methamphetamine or "ice" and marijuana after he was pulled over by a police detective on a road in Garapan.

Camacho dismissed the case against Qiran after assistant attorney general Shannon R. Foley moved to dismiss the case without prejudice, which means the government may re-open the matter.

Foley said as a result of defendant's current involvement with Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the government believes that it is in the best interest to dismiss this case.

Apparently, there is a U.S. Department of Homeland Security-Immigration and Customs Enforcement hold for Qiran at the Department of Corrections.

The police report did not mention why Qiran, a tour guide and a taxi driver, is wanted by Interpol.

According to a police detective, police officers were dispatched at 6pm last Dec. 23 to assist police detective Jesse Dubrall for a violator stop on a car, which was being driven by Qiran, who is allegedly wanted by Interpol.

Officers saw the car along Middle Road in Garapan and pursuit it until Asucena Avenue near Garapan Market.

When the officers patted down Qiran and his passenger, Joshua Sablan Diaz, officers allegedly found a crystal-like substance on Diaz's cargo pocket.

Dubrall allegedly found underneath the driver's seat of the car a bag containing baggies with crystal-like substance and green leafy substance believed to be marijuana.

Dubrall also found in the car a "large amount of money."

The crystal-like substance weighing 0.3 gross grams was tested presumptive positive for methamphetamine.

Diaz was also arrested. ***(Ferdie de la Torre)***

HAPPY NEW YEAR CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Residents of LNH Apartments in Lower Navy Hill ushered in the New Year with a potluck party in their parking lot. Photo shows several residents of the apartment flashing their winning smiles for the camera.

23 Korean students on island for month-long English camp

By FRAULEINE VILLANUEVA-DIZON
frauleine_villanueva@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Over 20 South Korean students are on island to participate in the month-long Costa World Tour English Camp.

The students, who arrived late last December, met with Saipan Mayor David M. Apatang yesterday to welcome them.

"Hopefully you go back to Korea with very good English," Apatang said.

He also urged them to come back to Saipan and bring with them their families as well as give them suggestions on how to improve the island.

With the opportunity to meet with the mayor, the young students asked several questions to Apatang showing their curiosity with the CNMI's cultures and traditions as well as lifestyle and economy. They also asked several questions about the mayor himself.

The 23 students are third to ninth graders and came from various schools in South Korea. They will be on island until Jan. 28.

As part of the program, the students will attend classes at Eucon International School.

Aside from learning English, the students also conduct community service activities and learn about the island's culture.

On Jan. 16, the students will be joining a cleanup with the Mayor's Office on their adopted highway area from Hopwood Jr. High School in San Antonio going south to Han Nam area in Koblerville.

Last year, 18 students participated in the same program, according to Costa World Tour president Yeon Tae Choi.

CIP PROGRAM OFFICE, OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

Caller Box 10007, Saipan, MP 969505 | Tel.: (670) 664-2375 | Fax: (670) 664-2408

INVITATION TO BID
ITB16-GOV-032
Parking Lot Paving at the Rota Mayor's Office

Governor Ralph DLG. Torres and Lt. Governor Victor B. Hocog, through the CIP Program Office are soliciting sealed bids to pave the parking lot at the Rota Mayor's Office on Rota, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

The project package will be available December 31, 2015 at the CIP Program Office, Office of the Governor, Juan A. Sablan Administration Building in Capitol Hill, Saipan. A $50.00 non-refundable fee for the project package will be assessed. **All interested bidders are required to include an Insurer Certification Clearance (ICC) in their bid packages in order to bid on this project. The ICC should be obtained at the Department of Commerce, Office of the Insurance Commissioner (OIC) on Capitol Hill.**

Bidding procedures shall be in full compliance with the CNMI Procurement Regulations, as revised through May 24, 2001. All wage rates for employees performing the work, labor and services on this project shall be paid at the current U.S. prevailing wage rates established for the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

There will be a pre-bid conference/site visit for this project on January 14, 2016, 9:00 a.m. ChST at the project site. All inquiries regarding this project must be submitted in writing no later than 4:30 p.m. ChST, January 19, 2016 to the CIP Program Office, Office of the Governor, Juan A. Sablan Administration Building, Capitol Hill, Saipan, or fax (670) 664-2408. All responses to inquiries will be shared with all prospective contractors.

Sealed bids must be marked ITB16-GOV-032 Parking Lot Paving at the Rota Mayor's Office. For bidders within the CNMI, an original and two copies of sealed bids must be submitted to the **Director of Procurement and Supply located at the former Emergency Management Office, Building No. 1301, Ascencion Drive, Capitol Hill, Saipan no later than 9:00 a.m. ChST January 28, 2016.** Bidders located outside of the CNMI may obtain an additional seven (7) working days for receipt of their bids by submitting a Notice of Intent to Bid. Notices of Intent to Bid must be received by the Director of Procurement & Supply no later than **9:00 a.m. ChST January 28, 2016** and must be transmitted via facsimile to (670) 664-1515, or via e-mail to procurement@pticom.com. For bidders located outside the CNMI, an original and two copies of sealed bids must be postmarked by the U.S. Postal Service or the official government postal service of a foreign country no later than January 28, 2016 and the bid documents must be received no later than February 05, 2016. Note that failure to submit the required number of copies may be cause for rejection of a bid.

Bids will be publicly open and read at the Division of Procurement and Supply, located at the former Emergency Management Office, Building No. 1301, Ascencion Drive, Capitol Hill, Saipan, at **10:00 a.m. ChST February 8, 2016.** However, if no notices of intent to bid are received from bidders outside the CNMI, bids will be open at **10:00 a.m. ChST January 28, 2016.**

For bids greater than Twenty-Five Thousand Dollars ($25,000.00) a bid security of fifteen percent (15%) of the bid amount must accompany the bid. Bid security shall be on a bid bond, in cash, by certified check, cashier's check or other form acceptable to the government. A surety company shall hold the certificate of authority from the U.S. Secretary of the Treasury as an acceptable surety or other surety acceptable to the Attorney General. Checks must be made payable to the CNMI Treasurer, with the name of the bidder and a notation on the face of the check: "Credit Account No. 44660". If a bid bond is submitted it must be accompanied by an Insurer Clearance Certification (ICC).

The bidder submitting the lowest responsive bid will be subject to a responsibility determination in conformance with the CNMI Procurement Regulations Section 70-30.3-245. The responsible bidder submitting the lowest responsive bid will be awarded a contract with the CNMI Government and will be required to deliver Performance and Payment bonds, each equal to 100% of the contract price for contracts greater than $25,000.00.

Prior to the execution of the contract, the selected contractor shall submit:
a) A current license from the bonding company showing that it has authority to issue bond in the CNMI, and
b) A certification from the bonding company that the unencumbered value of its assets (exclusive of all outstanding commitments on other bond obligations) exceeds the penal amount of each bond.

A contractor submitting an unacceptable payment or performance bond may be permitted a reasonable time, as determined by the P&S Director, to substitute an acceptable bond prior to executing a contract. Acceptable assets are only:
1) Cash
2) US Government Securities
3) Stocks and Bonds traded on US Security Exchange
4) Real Property owned in fee simple in US; and
5) Irrevocable Letters of Credit

Performance time for completion of this project is one hundred fifty (150) calendar days upon issuance of Notice to Proceed. The daily amount of liquidated damages shall be greater of (i) two hundred dollars ($200.00) per day, or (ii) two percent (2%) of the contract price divided by 150 calendar days, the contract time and will be accessed as delays beyond the established completion date.

All bid documents received shall become the sole property of the CNMI Government. The Government reserves the right to reject any or all bids and to waive any imperfection in a bid proposal that does not affect the elements of price, quantity, and delivery of the bid, in the best interest of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

Ralph DLG. Torres, Governor

Herman S. Sablan, Director
CNMI Procurement & Supply

CIP PROGRAM OFFICE, OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

Caller Box 10007, Saipan, MP 969505 | Tel.: (670) 664-2375 | Fax: (670) 664-2408

INVITATION TO BID
ITB16-GOV-033
Parking Lot Paving at the Rota Department of Public Safety and Fire Station

Governor Ralph DLG. Torres and Lt. Governor Victor B. Hocog, through the CIP Program Office are soliciting sealed bids to pave the parking lots at the Rota Department of Public Safety (DPS) and Fire Station on Rota, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

The project package will be available December 31, 2015 at the CIP Program Office, Office of the Governor, Juan A. Sablan Administration Building in Capitol Hill, Saipan. A $50.00 non-refundable fee for the project package will be assessed. **All interested bidders are required to include an Insurer Certification Clearance (ICC) in their bid packages in order to bid on this project. The ICC should be obtained at the Department of Commerce, Office of the Insurance Commissioner (OIC) on Capitol Hill.**

Bidding procedures shall be in full compliance with the CNMI Procurement Regulations, as revised through May 24, 2001. All wage rates for employees performing the work, labor and services on this project shall be paid at the current U.S. prevailing wage rates established for the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

There will be a pre-bid conference/site visit for this project on January 14, 2016, 11:00 a.m. ChST at the project site. All inquiries regarding this project must be submitted in writing no later than 4:30 p.m. ChST, January 19, 2016 to the CIP Program Office, Office of the Governor, Juan A. Sablan Administration Building, Capitol Hill, Saipan, or fax (670) 664-2408. All responses to inquiries will be shared with all prospective contractors.

Sealed bids must be marked ITB16-GOV-033 Parking Lot Paving at the Rota DPS and Fire Station. For bidders within the CNMI, an original and two copies of sealed bids must be submitted to the **Director of Procurement and Supply located at the former Emergency Management Office, Building No. 1301, Ascencion Drive, Capitol Hill, Saipan** no later than **9:00 a.m. ChST January 28, 2016.** Bidders located outside of the CNMI may obtain an additional seven (7) working days for receipt of their bids by submitting a Notice of Intent to Bid. Notices of Intent to Bid must be received by the Director of Procurement & Supply no later than 9:00 a.m. ChST January 28, 2016 and must be transmitted via facsimile to (670) 664-1515, or via e-mail to procurement@pticom.com. For bidders located outside the CNMI, an original and two copies of sealed bids must be postmarked by the U.S. Postal Service or the official government postal service of a foreign country no later than January 28, 2016 and the bid documents must be received no later than February 05, 2016. Note that failure to submit the required number of copies may be cause for rejection of a bid.

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The bidder submitting the lowest responsive bid will be subject to a responsibility determination in conformance with the CNMI Procurement Regulations Section 70-30.3-245. The responsible bidder submitting the lowest responsive bid will be awarded a contract with the CNMI Government and will be required to deliver Performance and Payment bonds, each equal to 100% of the contract price for contracts greater than $25,000.00.

Prior to the execution of the contract, the selected contractor shall submit:
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b) A certification from the bonding company that the unencumbered value of its assets (exclusive of all outstanding commitments on other bond obligations) exceeds the penal amount of each bond.

A contractor submitting an unacceptable payment or performance bond may be permitted a reasonable time, as determined by the P&S Director, to substitute an acceptable bond prior to executing a contract. Acceptable assets are only:
1) Cash
2) US Government Securities
3) Stocks and Bonds traded on US Security Exchange
4) Real Property owned in fee simple in US; and
5) Irrevocable Letters of Credit

Performance time for completion of this project is one hundred fifty (150) calendar days upon issuance of Notice to Proceed. The daily amount of liquidated damages shall be greater of (i) two hundred dollars ($200.00) per day, or (ii) two percent (2%) of the contract price divided by 150 calendar days, the contract time and will be accessed as delays beyond the established completion date.

All bid documents received shall become the sole property of the CNMI Government. The Government reserves the right to reject any or all bids and to waive any imperfection in a bid proposal that does not affect the elements of price, quantity, and delivery of the bid, in the best interest of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

Ralph DLG. Torres, Governor

Herman S. Sablan, Director
CNMI Procurement & Supply

Commonwealth Utilities Corporation

JOB VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

JVA No. **16-001**

Opening Date: **Friday, December 25, 2015**
Closing Date: **Thursday, January 07, 2016**

Trades Technician

(Diesel Power Plant Mechanic)

DUTIES: This class specification represents only the core areas of responsibilities; specific position assignments will vary depending on the needs of Power Generation. Primary duties are as a TRADES TECHNICIAN MECHANIC: Performs maintenance, operations, installations and/or repairs in assigned area of responsibility; provides technical guidance regarding assigned functions; and ensures quality service levels in accordance with proper procedures; Provide assistances in monitoring and complying with regulatory compliance; Operates specialized and heavy equipment; performs maintenance activities and skilled repairs to equipment, infrastructure and/or other items of assigned area of responsibility; Identifies issues and operational concerns; performs inspections; provides troubleshooting; evaluates corrective measures or options; recommends and implements solutions and corrective actions; Receives trouble calls; responds to requests and provides information or status updates. Initiates requests for the replenishment of materials and supplies; cleans, organizes and maintains work and supply areas; Analyzes readings of equipment; maintains records, logs, orders, data, and prepares reports; Perform reconditioning of used parts; Perform alignment of pumps and motors at auxiliary sites; Bending, cutting, grinding and fabricating various types of materials; Performs other duties of a similar nature and level as assigned.

LOCATION : Power Generation, Saipan, Northern Mariana Islands, USA.
(If needed, there may be periodic assignment to other divisions of CUC and/or other islands.)
SALARY : $20,826-$28,115 per annum.
POSITIONS : Three (3)
CONTRACT : Not Contracted.

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS: Technical Education in diesel mechanics or related field desired, High School Diploma, General Education Diploma, or Adult Basic Education. Must demonstrate having had (A) 4 years of increasingly responsible experience performing mechanic duties on 1,500 HP or larger diesel prime mover engines and associated auxiliary units. Experience on Mitsubishi MAN, EMD, Cummins and/or Nordberg diesel engines desired but not required. Knowledge of: Mechanical principles, practices and procedures of assigned service area; Mathematical concepts; Inspection procedures; Safety procedures and safe work practices; Skill in: Performing skilled maintenance, operations and repair work of various plant systems; Operating specialized and heavy equipment; Monitoring equipment and making adjustments; Performing inspections and identifying issues; Troubleshooting issues and recommending or implementing solutions; Receiving requests and trouble calls and providing assistance; Initiating supply requests; Taking equipment readings and maintaining historical data; Utilizing communication and interpersonal skills as applied to interaction with coworkers, supervisor to sufficiently exchange or convey information and to receive work direction. Able to lift and carry heavy objects of 45 pounds and over, climb ladders, reach above the shoulders, stand, sit, crawl and kneel for prolonged periods and perform repeated bending. Recognize color codes, operate cranes and motor vehicles. Work primarily inside around machinery in operation; in varying degree of temperature in tight or cramped (confined) work spaces, at heights, on ladders or scaffolds, and on slippery or uneven walking surfaces in close proximity to high and low voltage circuits and climbs stairs frequently. Occasionally use solvents, de-greasing agents, or other chemical agents, and be assigned to protracted or irregular hours of work; exposed to dust, oil, grease, constant or excessive noise, vibration, and smoke and gas fumes. Work closely with others and/or alone depending on assigned daily activities.

Drop off your CUC Employment Application at the CUC Human Resource Office located on the 3rd Floor of the Joeten Dandan Building on Saipan. Otherwise, you may drop it off at the Tinian and Rota Administration Office.

An Equal Opportunity Provider and Employer
P.O. Box 501220, Saipan, MP 96950-1220 U.S.A.
Tel. Nos. (670) 235-7025 to 32 Fax (670) 235-5131

Commonwealth Utilities Corporation

JOB VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

JVA No. **16-002**

Opening Date: **Friday, December 25, 2015**
Closing Date: **Thursday, January 07, 2016**

Trades Assistant

Duties: Under the direct supervision of the Power Generation Manager or his/her designee. Assists with the safe and efficient operation of all plant equipment and machinery including, but not limited to, incinerators, generators, operation of valves, plant production operations, and unloading of diesel fuel tank trucks to storage tanks. -Primary duties are as a TRADES ASSISTANT MECHANIC: Follows all safety and operations procedures during operations and maintenance activities; Monitoring Plant systems as assigned; Prepares job site for work including gathering and setting up materials and supplies, and setting work safety barriers for protection; Gathers, cleans and returns equipment, materials and supplies used; Cleans and maintains work site after project or repair work is complete; Monitors equipment; takes readings and collects data; documents equipment readings; prepares and submits data and work reports; Performs inventory spot checks to ensure adequate materials and supplies are available for daily work activities; Assisting with equipment inspections, cleaning, corrosion control, and painting; Operating incinerators; oil and water separator pump, servicing and preparing oil filters; Maintaining grounds, trimming trees and removing debris and housekeeping; Performs other duties of a similar nature and level as assigned.

LOCATION : Power Generation, Saipan, Northern Mariana Islands, USA.
(If needed, there may be periodic assignment to other divisions of CUC and/or other islands.)
SALARY : $16,742.00 per annum.
CONTRACT : Not Contracted.
POSITION(S) : Ten (10)

Minimum Requirements: High School Diploma or GED or ABE Program AS. Training and knowledge in operations repair, and maintenance of power generating and/or industrial equipment/facilities desired but not required. Knowledge of: Customer service principles; Basic mathematical concepts; Safety procedures and safe work practices; Modern office technology. Skills in: Operating heavy and light equipment machinery, hand and power tools required of assigned area; Adhering to safety procedures and safe work practices; Prioritizing tasks and managing time for efficiency; Identifying issues and solving problems; Providing attention to detail; Taking equipment readings and recording data; Maintaining activity logs and reports; Utilizing a computer and relevant software applications; Utilizing communication and interpersonal skills as applied to interaction with coworkers, supervisor, the general public, and others to sufficiently exchange or convey information and to receive work direction. Must Able to lift and carry heavy objects of 45 pounds and over, climb ladders, reach above the shoulders, stand, sit, crawl and kneel for prolonged periods and perform repeated bending. Recognize color codes, operate cranes and motor vehicles. Work inside around machinery in operation; in varying degree of temperature in tight or cramped (confined) work spaces, at heights, on ladders or scaffolds, and on slippery or uneven walking surfaces in close proximity to high and low voltage circuits and climbs stairs frequently. Occasionally use solvents, de-greasing agents, or other chemical agents, and be assigned to protracted or irregular hours of work. Work in environments exposed to dust, oil, grease, constant or excessive noise, vibration, and smoke and gas fumes. Work closely with others and/or alone depending on assigned daily activities. Must be available to work a 24/7 rotation shift to include weekends and holidays, may be on call for emergency response. Applicants may be tested. Subject to pre-employment drug test.

Drop off your CUC Employment Application at the CUC Human Resource Office located on the 3rd Floor of the Joeten Dandan Building on Saipan. Otherwise, you may drop it off at the Tinian and Rota Administration Office.

An Equal Opportunity Provider and Employer
P.O. Box 501220, Saipan, MP 96950-1220 U.S.A.
Tel. Nos. (670) 235-7025 to 32 Fax (670) 235-5131

Commonwealth Utilities Corporation

JOB VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

JVA No. **16-003**

Opening Date: **Friday, December 25, 2015**
Closing Date: **Thursday, January 07, 2016**

Fiscal Technician, Senior

Duties: Under the direct supervision of the Chief Financial Officer or his/her designee. May provide lead direction and/or supervise staff to include: prioritizing and assigning work; conducting performance evaluations; ensuring staff is trained; ensuring that employees follow policies and procedures; maintaining a healthy and safe working environment; and, making hiring, termination, and disciplinary recommendations. Receives, reviews and verifies vendor invoices and statements; service reports; time sheets; payroll information; and/or other payable documentation; ensures completeness and accuracy of calculations and information. Determines general ledger account information or expense allocation information; processes accounts payable or payroll transactions; routes check payment or wire transfer information for approval; posts accounts upon approval. Researches and reviews account, billing or system information; prepares reconciliations of financial data; updates and maintains account or employee data; calculates and prepares financial adjustments or account charge information. Assists internal and external customers with inquiries or account information; receives complaints; researches issues; provides information and explains processes and procedures; recommends resolutions to issues. Retrieves, files and maintains records, documents and tracking spreadsheets; processes purchase orders; prepares reports, work orders and/or audit confirmations; compiles documents and drafts correspondence. May provide testimony related to customer account disputes. Performs other duties of a similar nature and level as assigned.

LOCATION : CFO Division, Saipan, Northern Mariana Islands, USA.
SALARY : $22,865.00 per annum to $30,867.00
CONTRACT : Not Contracted.
POSITION(S) : One (1)

Minimum Requirements: Associate's Degree in Accounting or directly related field and 3 years of fiscal support experience. Knowledge of: Applicable Federal, Commonwealth and local laws, codes, regulations and/or ordinances; Supervisory principles, practices and techniques (based on assignment); Customer service principles; Mathematical principles; Recordkeeping principles; Research methods; Modern office technology. Skills in: Interpreting and applying applicable laws, codes, regulations and standards; Supervising, monitoring, training and evaluating staff (based on assignment); Receiving, reviewing, posting and reconciling fiscal data or account information; Verifying fiscal data and updating account information; Responding to inquiries, researching information and resolving issues; Performing mathematical calculations and making corrections and adjustments; Researching and preparing account adjustments and related documentation; Preparing and maintaining files, forms, correspondence, reports and records; Updating, maintaining and preparing reports and spreadsheet tracking documents; Researching account information and providing information regarding billing disputes; Organizing and maintaining records management systems; Utilizing a computer and relevant software applications; Utilizing communication and interpersonal skills as applied to interaction with coworkers, supervisor, the general public, and others to sufficiently exchange or convey information and to receive work direction. Applicants may be tested. Subject to pre-employment drug test.

Drop off your CUC Employment Application at the CUC Human Resource Office located on the 3rd Floor of the Joeten Dandan Building on Saipan. Otherwise, you may drop it off at the Tinian and Rota Administration Office.

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Tel. Nos. (670) 235-7025 to 32 Fax (670) 235-5131

Commonwealth Utilities Corporation

JOB VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

JVA No. **16-004**

Opening Date: **Friday, December 25, 2015**
Closing Date: **Thursday, January 07, 2016**

Fiscal Analyst

Duties: Under the direct supervision of the Chief Financial Officer or his/her designee. May lead or supervise staff to include: prioritizing and assigning work; conducting performance evaluations; ensuring staff is trained; ensuring that employees follow policies and procedures; maintaining a healthy and safe working environment; and, making hiring, termination, and disciplinary recommendations. Reviews, accounts for, and prepares various financial data such as: reconciling journal entries; accounts receivable aging; summary billing; accounting accruals; recording fixed asset costs or depreciation; calculating and posting payments, adjustments or allotments; and/or accounts payable invoice payments. May provide guidance, coordination and/or supervision of daily accounting activities. Monitors, reconciles and maintains general ledger accounts; prepares and posts journal entries during account closing periods. Performs analysis, verifies fiscal data, and prepares various management reports; provides inventory monitoring and status reports; reviews purchase order status, vendor statements, and performs quality checks for verification of services or materials received. Provides analytical support to internal and external customers and stakeholders; reviews documents and provides guidance in completion of forms; responds to inquiries or issues; researches and provides information on processes and procedures. Assists with annual audits by preparing schedules, reports and providing technical support. May provide supervision or coordination of physical inventory processes; reconciliation of inventory balances in preparation for financial reporting; and/or monitoring vehicle maintenance schedules and approving vehicle repairs and maintenance. Performs other duties of a similar nature and level as assigned.

LOCATION : CFO Division, Saipan, Northern Mariana Islands, USA.
SALARY : $37,756 per annum to $50,970.00 per annum.
CONTRACT : Not Contracted.
POSITION(S) : One (1)

Minimum Requirements: Bachelor's Degree in Accounting or directly related field and 2 years of fiscal experience related to area of assignment. Knowledge of: Applicable Federal, Commonwealth and local laws, codes, regulations and/or ordinances; Supervisory principles, practices and techniques (based on assignment); Generally accepted accounting principles; Financial analysis principles and techniques; Advanced mathematical concepts; Research methods; Customer service principles; Modern office technology. Skills in: Interpreting and applying applicable laws, codes, regulations and standards; Supervising, monitoring, training and evaluating staff (based on assignment); Providing guidance and leading work activities (based on assignment); Prioritizing activities and meeting deadlines; Preparing financial information, adjustments and entries related to general ledger; Researching, compiling, calculating and reconciling data and information; Researching technical issues, solving problems and providing solutions; Monitoring and maintaining fiscal account information and reporting; Reconciling data, preparing adjustments and posting account and journal entries; Providing attention to accuracy and detail; Preparing reports, correspondence and related fiscal documentation; Providing customer service; Providing technical guidance related to financial systems; Maintaining databases and financial records; Assisting with audits, inventory processes and/or equipment maintenance schedules; Utilizing a computer and relevant software applications; Utilizing communication and interpersonal skills as applied to interaction with coworkers, supervisor, the general public, and others to sufficiently exchange or convey information and to receive work direction. Applicants may be tested. Subject to pre-employment drug test.

Drop off your CUC Employment Application at the CUC Human Resource Office located on the 3rd Floor of the Joeten Dandan Building on Saipan. Otherwise, you may drop it off at the Tinian and Rota Administration Office.

An Equal Opportunity Provider and Employer
P.O. Box 501220, Saipan, MP 96950-1220 U.S.A.
Tel. Nos. (670) 235-7025 to 32 Fax (670) 235-5131

DUE TO DROPPING FUEL PRICES

CUC decreases FAC after four months

After four months, the Commonwealth Utilities Corp. adjusted once again its Fuel Adjustment Charge decreasing it to $0.12076 per kilowatt hour.

The said charge will be effective Jan. 1 from the previous $0.14445 per kWh will decrease to $.12076 per kWh.

This is due to the drop in the average fuel prices.

"As a result, residential customers who use 445 kWh of power per month will pay approximately $10 less in their monthly billing," CUC said.

The FAC began going down last August from about $0.16 cents following an increase last May and June with $0.171 and $0.193 respectively.

According to CUC, CNMI consumers have experienced an almost 50-percent decline in the FAC since mid-2014 when on October of that year, FAC, then called Levelized Energy Adjustment Clause or LEAC, was at around $0.30.

The Commonwealth Public Utilities Commission granted CUC the ability to adjust the FAC rate based on the price of oil. Adjustments are made when the Mean of Platts Singapore (MOPS) monthly pricing equals or exceeds 4.5-percent of the average per gallon cost of fuel used in the calculation of the FAC rate.

FAC is used to purchase fuel and serves as one of the two components that make up a CUC power bill.

CUC first instituted LEAC in 2009 to recover fuel and fuel related costs, a system also used by power providers in Guam and the Virgin Islands. ***(Frauleine Villanueva-Dizon)***

NMTI welcomes challenges ahead in 2016

By DAISY DEMAPAN
daisy_demapan@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Northern Marianas Terminal Institute has begun its classes for the year and invites prospective students to pursue vocational education.

Technical trades in automotive technology, culinary arts, electrical, carpentry, masonry, air-conditioning and welding are currently available.

Chief operating officer Agnes McPhetres states that the institute was intended to meet the technical training needs of Northern Mariana Island residents and is encouraging interested individuals to visit their campus in lower base to meet with resident faculty who can provide career counseling.

Despite the relentless obstacles of 2015 and damages incurred by the trades school, McPhetres says, "we welcome the challenge ahead of us in 2016, as the institute is currently working on getting an agreement going with CUC (Commonwealth Utilities Corp.) to provide their staff with U.S. Department of Labor-certified training in the area of power generation. Our construction trades program is also certified by the National Center for Construction Education and Research that is acknowledged by USDOL as being a qualified provider of education in such vocations, satisfying the concerns of the CUC board about being an accredited institution in this regard."

As the accrediting body for the industry, NCCER establishes the benchmark for quality training and assessments. By partnering with industry and academia, NCCER has developed a system for program accreditation that is similar to those found in institutions of higher learning. This process fosters national unity among the construction industry while providing a defined career path with industry-recognized credentials.

NMTI would like to thank the CNMI Department of Labor and the Hotel Association of the Northern Mariana Islands for continuing to refer prospective clients in the past year and encourages other stakeholders seeking qualified employees to refer potential employees to the institute for further professional development in their areas of interest.

For more information on the various trades offered, visit www.nmticnmi.com or call 235-6684.

TREE PLANTING CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Fifty seedlings of crotons and palms from the Division of Agriculture were planted yesterday at the Dandan Homestead Children's Park by employees of Best Sunshine International Ltd.'s corporate social responsibility team. It is part of the company's "Village Pride" beautification campaign.

Cop chases ex-convict who allegedly burglarized restaurant

A police officer chased and arrested an ex-convict who ran away after allegedly burglarizing a closed restaurant in Garapan and trying to hit the owner with a rock on Sunday night.

Police officer John Cabrera found the suspect, Johnny B. John, hiding under a tree covered with heavy vines and bushes near YP Apartment in Garapan.

John, 28, was taken to Superior Court yesterday on charges of burglary, assault with a dangerous weapon, assault and battery, criminal mischief, and disturbing the peace.

Associate Judge Teresa Kim-Tenorio imposed a $20,000 cash bail and set the preliminary hearing for Jan. 13 at 9am.

Attorney Richard Pierce was appointed as counsel for John. Assistant attorney general Heather Barcinas appeared for the government.

According to police detective Jason A. Bahillo, the owner of New Double Luck Restaurant located along Alaihai Avenue, was having dinner with his staff after they closed the establishment on Sunday night.

The owner wondered why the kitchen lights were off when he turned them on after cooking their dinner.

The owner turned on the lights and discovered that the rear screen-door sliding lock was not in place and the door of the storage room was open.

The owner checked the storage room, where he found a man, who was later identified as John, hiding underneath a box.

The owner and his staff stopped John, but the suspect managed to run outside and took a rock from the ground. John tried to hit the restaurant's owner with the rock.

It was at 10:42pm when a security guard at the Best Sunshine live casino reported the incident to police.

After a few minutes, three police officers, including Cabrera, came and chased John, who ran into a jungle area near YP Apartment along Puti Tainobui Avenue.

At 11:14pm, Cabrera apprehended John.

According to court documents, John has previous criminal convictions, mostly burglary and theft when he was still a juvenile. He also has a pending theft case. ***(Ferdie de la Torre)***

Water service interruption set this Thursday

Commonwealth Utilities Corp. customers in the Kanat Tabla tank service area will experience a temporary water service interruption this week as Engineering and Operations personnel begin performance tests at the reservoir.

On Thursday, Jan. 7, CUC Water Division will secure the Kanat Tabla reservoir to conduct load testing and calculate the volume of water pumped into the tank during a five-hour period. The testing will verify the amount of water pumping through Booster Pump One to the Kanat Tabla reservoir.

The testing process will begin at 7am and the temporary service interruption will include the entire Kanat Tabla tank service area, which includes the villages of Kanat Tabla, Chalan Kiya, Finasisu, As Perdido, and Chalan Laulau. Service will be restored to the affected areas at 12pm the same day.

On Friday, Jan. 8, customers in Chalan Laulau will resume their regularly scheduled water hours from 6am to 10am, or as tank levels permit.

For more information, please visit our website www.cucgov.org or contact the 24-hour CUC Customer Call Center at 664-4CUC (664-4282). ***(CUC)***

Police arrests two men for separate domestic violence

Two men were arrested in separate domestic violence incidences in Koberville and Tanapag last week.

Allan Akihiko Muna Nishimura, 30, was arrested for assault and battery, and disturbing the peace.

Clifford Kani Norita, 33, was arrested for assault with a dangerous weapon, assault and battery, and disturbing the peace.

Superior Court Associate Judge Joseph N. Camacho kept the original $15,000 cash bail on Nishimura and the $6,500 cash bail on Norita.

According to police detective Edwin B. Camacho, two police officers responded to Nishimura's residence in Koblerville Homestead last Dec. 26 at 9:36am after Nishimura's common-law wife called for police assistance.

The alleged victim told police that she and Nishimura were arguing since Christmas Day because she did not like the way he was scolding their two minor sons.

She said at 1am on Dec. 26, Nishimura allegedly slapped her on the right cheek, splashed water to her face, threw her onto the bed, put his hand and blanket in her mouth, and choked her.

Nishimura told police that he was just trying to control his wife, who is a bipolar and started going crazy at that time.

In Norita's case, police detective Therese S. Kintoki stated in her report that the defendant accused his common-law wife of having an affair.

Kintoki said the alleged victim told police that Norita locked her leg with his legs, grabbed her neck and choked her, kicked her on the face and chest, smacked her on the face, and slammed her on the bed.

Norita also allegedly pinched the skin of his wife's throat using pliers and tried to poke a scissor or a pen at her.

The alleged beating happened in Tanapag in the afternoon of Dec. 30. The victim had scratches on the face and arms, police said. Norita was later arrested that same day. ***(Ferdie de la Torre)***

FENCING IT CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Employees of Best Sunshine International Ltd.'s corporate social responsibility team gathered in Kagman 2 to restore the area's basketball fence, which has been totally damaged by Typhoon Soudelor. Recently, BSI's CSR team restored back the court and its fence to its original look.

RFP to build, operate Outer Cove Marina to be completed

By FRAULEINE VILLANUEVA-DIZON
frauleine_villanueva@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

A request for proposal for the development of the closed Outer Cove Marina will soon be completed by the Department of Lands and Natural Resources.

"We're very close to completing the request for proposal for the Outer Cove Marina," DLNR Secretary Richard Seman said.

The Outer Cove Marina was closed last November after a gangway suddenly collapsed earlier in July. An inspection later on by the Building Safety Code Division of Department of Public Works recommended to DLNR to prohibit the use of its structures.

Seman said the RFP would require the company to handle the operations at the marina.

"This RFP entails design, construct, and operate. That way it would be completely out of our hands," Seman said.

The RFP would also only involve the submerged lands and not the fast lands, which will be maintained as is, according to Seman. The fast land, or land above water, near the Outer Cove Marina is under the National Park Service and not DLNR.

"This design, construct, and operate is strictly for the docking facility in the water," Seman said.

"Right now it's not going to involve any building or any other facility. That has to be arranged separately with the National Park Service," he added.

Companies who want to develop the fast land must communicate directly to the concessionaire branch of NPS.

Earlier, there were proposals to build an establishment were tourists can wait and have snacks while waiting for the boats to take them to Managaha island and other activities.

"Now we're more concerned with the docks itself," Seman said.

According to Seman, there are a couple of companies who are interested in developing the marina.

"There are basically two companies now that are willing to participate in the RFP. Both I guess would have their own interest in running the facility to serve their own particular, whatever venture they are in," Seman said.

"Once the RFP is done we're going to advertise it and whatever the number of applicant, we'll review them and basically choose the one that is offering the most in whatever they want to do in the Outer Cove Marina, the one that will provide more development, more slips, more docks, breakwater, stuff like that," he added.

PIC Duck Race set next month

Going on its eighth year, the Pacific Islands Club's annual Duck Race and Human Duck Race will commence Feb. 6 at 6pm.

All in all, 2,500 rubber ducks are currently on sale. PIC staff and management are out and about selling ducks in the community and, with the help of social media, around the world. A limited number of ducks will also be sold at the Garapan Street Market on Jan. 21 and 28.

PIC director of sports, entertainment and activities Glenn Policare said duck sales are already going strong. "We have quite a few repeater guests in-house right now who have been part of the duck race for years. Russian, Korean, and Japanese guests have already picked up their ducks to help the cause." Aside from Saipan, ducks have been sold to buyers in Guam, Thailand, Hawaii, and all over the mainland U.S. "It is truly incredible to see the support we get for this event each and every year," said Policare.

Prior to the rubber duck race, PIC Saipan will once again be hosting the famous Race around the River. This is better known as the Human Duck Race. Last year's winner, Takumi Sugie, who represented Saipan International School, was the fastest swimmer in the event. This year, companies will be asked to submit three participants to the 2016 relay. "To try and even out the field and to allow more participation, this year's Human Duck Race will have three-person teams battling for top honors and the perpetual trophy," said Policare.

There are 24 available slots for the human duck race. Bridge Capital, LLC and the Saipan Swim Club were the first two organizations to confirm participation.

The entry fee for companies is only $50 and the winning team of the Human Duck race will receive three PIC membership passes. Rubber ducks for the duck race are $5. Prizes for the rubber duck race is $2,500 for first place, $300 for second place, $200 for third place, and $50 for fourth place.

Proceeds from the event will be donated to the Commonwealth Cancer Association.

For more information, contact PIC at 234-7976 and request to be transferred to SEA department or contact Glenn Policare at glenn.policare@picsaipan.com. ***(PR)***

Ocaya graduates from basic training

U.S. Army Pvt. Allan T. Ocaya has graduated from basic infantry training at Fort Jackson, S.C.

During the nine weeks of training, the soldier studied the Army mission, history, tradition and core values, physical fitness, and received instruction and practice in basic combat skills, military weapons, chemical warfare and bayonet training, drill and ceremony, marching, rifle marksmanship, armed and unarmed combat, map reading, field tactics, military courtesy, military justice system, basic first aid, foot marches, and field training exercises.

Ocaya is the son of Catherine A. Torculas and Orlando C. Ocaya of Saipan, Northern Mariana Islands.

He is a 2015 graduate of Marianas High School, Saipan, Northern Mariana Islands. ***(Joint Hometown News Service)***

Military training at FDM, Warning Area 517

ASAN, Guam—The U.S. Air Force will conduct training at the island of Farallon de Medinilla during the following dates and times:

- Jan. 6-7, from 10am to 5pm
- Jan. 8, from 10am to 6pm

The U.S. Navy will conduct training at Warning Area 517 on Jan. 7, from noon to 8pm

The general public, especially fishermen, commercial pilots and marine tour operators are advised to stay clear of the areas during the dates and times indicated.

The general location of the training on the island of Farallon de Medinilla will be on a 12-nautical mile radius on all quadrants. W-517 is an irregular shaped polygon comprising of 14,000 nautical square miles of airspace that begins south of Guam and extends south-southwest in international waters. ***(PR)***

BIRTHDAY SHOUTOUT

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Belated happy birthday to Mommy Anna Myrra Francisco! Thank you for your love and many more wishes and blessings to come. From your loving daughter Janelle.

PACIFIC ISLANDS CLUB SAIPAN

We are seeking for high energy individuals with a positive, can do attitude.
Pacific Islands Club, Saipan is inviting qualified, U.S. workers to apply for the following positions:

(1) ACCOUNTING ASSISTANT
Minimum of two (2) years of work experience, preferably in hospitality and knowledge of generally accepted accounting and bookkeeping principles and procedures. Degree in accounting is required. Strong knowledge in using front office systems and point-of-sale systems such as Opera Property Management System and Micros POS. Must be able to work evenings, C-shift (for night audit reliever 11PM-7AM), weekends and holidays.

(1) ASSISTANT FRONT OFFICE MANAGER
Assists with the Front Office operations, including a Call Center, Concierge, Tour Desk and Guest Service operations; Must have the ability to train employees to ensure standards of the hotel are met. Minimum of five (5) years of hotel/hospitality is required. Minimum of two (2) years of previous experience managing the Front Office of a hotel is required. Excellent written and oral communication skills are necessary. Must be able to solve guest complaints and work in a high-pressured environment. Must be able to speak and understand one or more of the following languages: Korean, Japanese or Russian; Must be able to work graveyard shifts, evenings, weekends, and holidays.

(2) BARTENDER
Minimum one (1) year of related work experience; Must be at least 21 years old. Ability to speak Chinese, Korean, Russian or Japanese is preferred. Must be able to work evenings, weekends and holidays.

(1) CHINESE COOK
Minimum of two (2) years related work experience in preparing Chinese cuisine. Must be able to coordinate and support team members within the kitchen department. Must be able to communicate clearly in English. Must be able to work evenings, weekends, and holidays.

CLUBMATES
Applicants must have previous related work experience and must pass all American Red Cross Lifeguard requirements (including a 300 yard continuous swim test); Sports-minded individuals are encouraged to apply; Must possess good verbal and written communication skills; Korean, Japanese and/or Russian language skill is a plus; Paid training and free two year lifeguard certification course for eligible candidates; Must be able to work on evenings, weekends and holidays.

(1) COOK
Minimum of one (1) year related work experience. Must be able to work evenings, weekends, and holidays.

(1) ELECTRICIAN
Minimum of five (5) years work experience. Must be able to work shifts, weekends, and holidays.

(1) FRONT DESK CLERK
Minimum of one (1) year work experience, preferably in hospitality. Previous cashiering experience required. Fluency in Korean, Russian and/or Japanese languages is preferred. Must be able to work evenings, graveyard shifts, weekends and holidays.

(1) ENTERTAINMENT MANAGER
Applicant must have previous choreography and dance experience with at least one year in a similar role. Must be versed in a wide variety of dance styles. Previous teaching experience is preferred. Must be versed in music editing programs and be able to learn how to operate the equipment in the PIC sound booth. Must be a certified American Red Cross lifeguard or be able to pass all American Red Cross Lifeguard requirements (including a 300 yard continuous swim test) in order to achieve certification. Strong communication, interpersonal and customer service skills are essential. Must have working knowledge of Microsoft Office with the ability to work well under pressure. Strong attention to detail and the ability to work under deadlines are necessary qualifications for the Entertainment Manager. Must be versed in all aspects of the "CLUBMATE" position as they will also be scheduled shifts in and around the beach/waterpark. Korean, Japanese and/or Russian language skills preferred. Must be able to work a flexible schedule including early morning hours, nights, weekends and holidays.

(1) HVAC TECHNICIAN
Minimum of four (4) years related work experience. Must be able to work evenings, weekends, and holidays.

(1) KOREAN COOK
Must have at least a minimum 2 years of related experience with Korean cuisine and ingredients. Must have previous experience in high volume production including large banquets, functions and special events. High School Diploma or higher is required. Must be able to work early mornings, nights, weekends, and holidays.

(1) MERCHANDISE COORDINATOR
Minimum of one (1) year of work experience handling clerical work involved with receiving, storing, stocking, inventory and distribution of supplies for the Boutiki store. Must have good computer skills and have the ability to bend, lift, carry, push, reach and handle inventory supplies weighing 50-75 pounds. Must have the ability to speak, read and comprehend the English language. Must be able to work evenings, weekends and holidays.

(1) MUSICIAN
Minimum two (2) years experience as a musician; Must be able to perform music in English as well as Japanese/Korean/Russian; Need to be able to play a variety of music genres, classical, pop, rock, reggae, country etc. Must be able to play on an individual, duo and trio basis; At least one member must be a classical pianist, playing classical music during restaurant dining hours. Must be able to host events, MC events, be able to promote audience participation during sing-a-long shows. Must be able to work evenings, weekends and holidays. May be subject to audition.

(1) NETWORK ADMINISTRATOR
Minimum of five (5) years experience in the IT industry. Thorough knowledge of all software and hardware is required; this includes all Microsoft Windows desktop and server operating systems, Microsoft application support, SQL 2005 administration skills, Symantec Product experience with Ghost, ACT! And corporate anti-virus software, Access database and report design skills with IIS, ASP and HTML Skills. Linux skills and Active Directory experience is highly desirable. Experience in the use of electronic mail (mail relays, spam filters and mail integrity) and Internet protocols (e.g. TCP/IP, PPP and IMAP). Sound knowledge of routers, firewalls, network security, network configuration and construction, switches and fiber is required. Applicant should have in depth knowledge of VPN, VPN encryption, PC and server hardware, new PC and server installations, configuration and support, System backups and general network administration.

(1) POWERHOUSE OPERATOR
Minimum of three (3) years related work experience. Certified Water Treatment and Distribution Operator preferred. Must be a certified Class A/B UST operator. Must be able to work evenings, weekends and holidays.

(1) POWERHOUSE SUPERVISOR
Minimum three (3) years experience in diesel power generator operations and one (1) year of supervisory experience. Must be a certified Water Treatment operator Class 2 and Water Distribution Class 1. Must be certified Class A/B UST operator. Must be able to work evenings, weekends and holidays.

(2) SALES ASSOCIATE
Seeking a highly motivated sales associates to join our team. The ideal candidate will have customer service experience and be able to work flexible hours. Bilingual in Japanese, Korean or Russian a plus. Previous Retail experience preferred, but we are willing to train. Must be able to work evenings, weekends and holidays.

(1) WAITSTAFF
Minimum of three (3) months of work experience. Must be able to work evenings, weekends and holidays.

Applications must be received by 5:00pm on Thursday, January 7th, 2016
PIC applications are available at the PIC Security Desk by the Loading Dock/Employee Entrance.
Incomplete applications will NOT be accepted or considered.
PIC is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

Opinion

Hafa Adai!
Saipan Tribune
THE CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER
Volume XXVI, Issue No. 3

Published daily at 2/F JP Center,
Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, CNMI
Mailing Address: PMB 34, Box 10001, Saipan, MP, 96950

Jayvee L. Vallejera EDITOR
editor@saipantribune.com

Mark Rabago ASSOCIATE EDITOR
mark_rabago@saipantribune.com

MEMBER

The Associated Press | Pacific Islands News Association

EDITORIAL

Why using exciting words can make you a worse writer

Leilen Shelton, a middle school teacher in Costa Mesa, Calif., might translate that famous dictum from the famously plain-writing Hemingway this way: "All you have to do is write one illuminating, ineluctably verifiable sentence. Author the most perspicacious sentence that you comprehend."

Shelton wrote "Banish Boring Words," a crusade against milquetoast words like "good," "bad," "fun" and "said." Some of her disciples also eschew "go," "run," "happy," "walk" and "see."

"There are so many more sophisticated rich words to use," Shelton told The Wall Street Journal. Instead of "said," for instance, she recommends bark, howl, cackle, demand.

We salute Shelton's campaign against lifeless language.

But we worry that the admonition to gussy up writing by jettisoning short, common words in favor of allegedly more expressive terms could go awry in the hands of the average seventh-grader. Sometimes people do say things. They don't aver them. Or assert them. Or declare them.

One website suggests "200 Ways to Say Went" and includes "wormed" and "peregrinated." That sound you hear is a collective groan from a nation of seventh-grade English teachers.

By all means, budding sesquipedalians, ransack your Thesaurus. Scour it for synonyms to replace tepid words. Learn the thrill of unearthing le mot juste—the perfect word for a sentence; 19th-century French novelist Gustave Flaubert, who coined the phrase, often spent weeks in that pursuit.

Some writers pursue the perfect word to show off their test-ready vocabularies, which is egotistical.

Others pursue the perfect word because they want their writing to be lively, which is admirable, to a point.

Still others—Can you hear our soft applause? And the shy trumpet?—pursue the perfect word because it will bring clarity, precision of meaning, to their thoughts, their sentences, their paragraphs, their essays, their books.

To be crisply effective, writing has to efficiently communicate what the writer wants to say. It must be clear. When words send readers exploring alleys of thought—I wonder if, by laconic, she's trying to tell me "lazy," or "slow"?—then the less likely they are to rejoin the writer's journey, let alone ever reach its destination.

So remember, we beg, that words are tools, not bludgeons. Avoid obscure polysyllabic words that no one else can read, spell or … understand. Because your readers may just stop reading. For them, nothing is easier.

Once you know all the fancy terms, you can choose to wield the simple ones with greater force.

In time, a skilled teacher will mention that understatement often is more powerful than overstatement.

Clarity of purpose, precision of word choice, not letting readers stray from the journey, tools not bludgeons, the power of understatement. Now you're getting somewhere.

Writing a true declarative sentence, Hemingway said, is "a good and severe discipline."

In other words, it's a lot of fun.

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2015: Weird Year

By JOHN S. DELROSARIO JR.
Special to the Saipan Tribune

John DelRosario Jr. is a former publisher of the Saipan Tribune *and a former secretary of the Department of Public Lands. All views expressed by the author are his/her own and do not necessarily reflect the opinion and stance of the* Saipan Tribune.

Are we ready to remember 2015 or is it a year we prefer forgetting as quickly as possible given the natural and man-made mess we're in today. The loss of loved-ones is especially devastating!

The year started with a superstorm pummeling the islands and closes with the loss of a governor while corruption, via the comforts of affluenza, spreads like stage four cancer in government. Affluenza is when politicians ignore the golden rules declaring, "we have money, we make the rules." It's a prompt trashing of people they represent. Call it self-destruction!

We feel orphaned as we quiz: what happens next? Is our future in sturdy hands or are we supposed to second-guess the tangled web created by incompetent public officials? Isn't it time that "we the people" collectively reset our buttons responsibly?

The deepening fiscal mess coupled by a rookie chief navigator who has never sailed a canoe leaves the query: what's our collective future? How sure is this journey manned by crewmembers that don't know what a paddle looks like or couldn't care less that the sail is in shreds? It's one tough and rough sailing hence.

Mired in uncertainty, about the only certainty we find in our 2016 Basket is uncertainty. This while we take stock of stagnant wages and salaries dragging us through the vicious streets of uncompromising hardship. Is there at least a faint of hope in hopelessness? Would there be strides in the provision of significant solutions driven measures to ease hardship at home or would the reverse be a more realistic expectation?

Sen. Arnold Palacios offered retarded pitch about policies impacting the future of the NMI. Is he talking of his dilly-dally bid fronting for BSI? We're not as dumb as we look, sir! Struggling to sound professorial doesn't make you one either!

Sure, let's give the shift in "solutions driven" team a chance to flex their muscles. Realistically though there's no room for muscle flexing and not when a waterless well is empty! Some creative method of financing may be in order to pay for expenses that increase annually by leaps and bounds. Solutions driven would be put to a real test in how it disposes of matters of state. I still can't fathom fourteen years of toxic republican bankrupting of the NMI. What legacy!

As the imperial Capital Hill tandem reassesses the useless empty well in the middle of the desert we muddle along picking scorched grass leaves and roots on the ground. It may not be the tasty and nutritious food we're used to but where necessity dictates there really isn't much of a choice. Hope useless platitudes isn't the order of business moving forward. Have heard and seen it all where it satisfies the ego of politicians who are confused with what to make of issues before them.

Difficult as may be

The difficulty we face hence isn't cause for celebration of any sort. This is where collective experience and wisdom are needed to plug holes or place firewalls around the building of the NMI treasury.

It's an issue is in the palm of our hands. It requires real leadership not confused airheads whose only agenda is to inflate their ego as they collect more green bags and vouchers to cover their expenses. This would have to change forthwith!

The bloated public sector payroll must be brought under control. Give taxpayers a chance to take home more of their fully earned income. It's high time that we the taxpayers seriously question ill-fated disposition of our taxes. We must proactively demand explanations how imperial Capital Hill spends our money given fourteen years of stagnancy in wages and salaries! Si JR.

The beautiful sunset

The colorful sunset started dimming across the horizon as I take my seat along the peaceful shores for my personal retreat. I watched the night skies turn dark hoping for slow glitter of a million stars. But the evening turned into a somber and starless night. Well, can't win `em all.

It didn't stop my pacing the shore humming "My Isle of Golden Dreams." Not sure why the melody. The chorus says in part, "I hear the voice of my land, calling me it seems, my fair Hawaiian Islands, my isle of golden dreams." It's a tune of longing of home away from her shores.

Perhaps I must have strayed off my spiritual commitment of the ultimate isle of golden dreams. Must revisit it. Like a half-full cup I need to refill it so I could secure calm and tranquility no matter where I roam. What uplifting experience dropping my spiritual anchor once more.

You should do the same once a year. You'd be surprised by the health and other benefits that come from meditation in the purposeful realignment of our lives. Trust me. I've seen its grand benefits over the last six decades.

Along the way, it prepares us to be an ATV or All Terrain Vehicle as you deal with your own set of challenges. That you eventually build that sense of calm and patience grants you a more thoughtful approach to the heavier issues. A little dedication as this daily resetting of button turns second nature and calming too.

I sat facing the shallow waters listening to tiny waves crash land against the shore. It's very calming. Then I heard white doves whistling in the heavens as they head home at dusk. Occasionally, I'd hear fish flip perhaps chasing smaller prey. The

See WEIRD on Page 11

US can afford to side with Iran over Saudis

By NOAH FELDMAN
Bloomberg View

Noah Feldman is a Bloomberg View columnist.

The rapidly escalating conflict between Saudi Arabia and Iran, sparked by the execution of a Saudi Shiite activist, may seem like the natural outgrowth of a decade's Sunni-Shiite tensions. But more than denominational differences, what's driving the open conflict is the Saudis' deepening fear that the U.S. is shifting its loyalties in the Persian Gulf region from its traditional Saudi ally to a gradually moderating Iran. And in a sense, they're right: Although the U.S. is a long way from becoming an instinctive Iranian ally, the nuclear deal has led Washington to start broadening its base in the Gulf, working with Iran where the two sides have overlapping interests. Of which there are many these days.

The Saudis executed the activist, Nimr al-Nimr (it means Tiger the Tiger, by the way, which could possibly be the best name ever), last weekend because they wanted to send a message to the country's Shiite minority and neighbors, and because they thought they could get away with it.

The outspoken al-Nimr symbolized the possibility that Saudi Shiites might never fully accept their second-class status and, worse, might seek autonomy or independence in the event of the Saudi state's weakness. The Saudis seem to have calculated that if Iran made any noise about the execution, it would not have leverage to do anything about it. Undoubtedly the Saudis knew the Americans wouldn't be best pleased with them for killing a nonviolent activist — but again, they must've thought it wouldn't matter.

Executing al-Nimr was thus probably intended to demonstrate that the Saudis can go it alone, making security-related decisions without worrying what their neighbors or the U.S. think. If that's right, the execution was an indirect signal that Saudi Arabia is feeling isolated, and that if isolated, it will act unilaterally.

Here the Saudis overplayed their hand. The Iranians reacted cleverly. First, the government stirred up public sentiment by condemning the execution. Then, it allowed angry protesters to storm the Saudi Embassy in Tehran. Finally, the Iranian government shut down the protest, made arrests and issued public statements disclaiming responsibility for what had happened.

To be sure, the Iranian government is a complex organism with many moving parts, and the whole response likely wasn't planned or coordinated by a single actor. But the result was highly effective. It showed the Saudis that Iran took the execution as directed toward it. And it simultaneously gave other countries the cover they would need to side with Iran.

The Americans, rather remarkably, took the Iranian side. U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry let it be known that he was talking to his Iranian counterpart, Mohammad Javad Zarif. In the past, a U.S. secretary of state would've reached out solely to the Saudi foreign minister, not least because there were no official diplomatic ties to Iran. Meanwhile, a former deputy CIA director, Michael Morell, publicly praised the Iranians for their handling of the situation in Tehran. This was downright astonishing, given Americans' historical associations with embassy occupation there.

These reactions show that Saudi worries about American abandonment are to a degree justified. After the Iran nuclear deal, American foreign policy makers can look at an episode like the al-Nimr affair and ask: Whose fault is this? If the answer is the Saudis, the U.S. can now afford to side with Iran.

More broadly, this shift reflects increasingly overlapping U.S.-Iranian interests. Both want to stabilize Iraq, including by keeping the Iraqi Sunnis in a secondary position. Both would like to defeat Islamic State, a relatively low priority for the Saudis, who either don't fear the Sunni militant group or fear it so much they don't want to join the battle.

There are still plenty of points where U.S. and Saudi interests converge, and oppose Iranian interests. Both sides dislike Syrian President Bashar Assad and want Hezbollah to have less, not more, power in Lebanon. Both want to stabilize Egypt and indeed the region more broadly, creating a broad-based Sunni alliance to balance Iranian expansion.

But an alliance based on accidents of converging policy is a lot less solid than what Saudi Arabia traditionally had with the U.S., namely an alliance based on reliable, instinctual friendship. In that longtime relationship, the Americans ignored Saudi human-rights abuses and absolutism, and the Saudis turned a blind eye to unflinching U.S. support for Israel. Among close friends, such aberrations can be forgiven. That's now changing, and the Saudis are understandably feeling nervous about it.

The painful truth for the Saudis is that the U.S. and Iran are plausible strategic allies, whose once close relationship was disrupted by the Islamic Revolution. The U.S. preference for Saudi Arabia in the Gulf was the result of Iranian intransigence and ideology, not any inherent strategic advantage possessed by the kingdom.

A Republican president, urged on by Israel, might conceivably try to roll back the Obama administration's steps to realignment, and bring back the good old days for the Saudis. And Hillary Clinton might be tougher on Iran than Barack Obama has been. But foreign policy continuity on Iran is likely, regardless of rhetoric. Any president will need to try and produce wins on Islamic State and Iraq — and those can't be achieved without Iran.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

A succession crisis

The electorate of the CNMI people should realize that we have a succession crisis resulting from the untimely passing of our late governor. Second, so far the CNMI has encountered two separate occasions where the OAG and the Attorney General effected an opinion that became the public policy. The case involved a situation of resignation of the lieutenant governor, and the OAG and the attorney general opined that the appointment of a person outside the line of succession as required by Section 7 of Article III of the CNMI Constitution was lawful and constitutional. The second case involved the line of succession relating to the resignation of the governor in which the OAG and the attorney general opined that the succession to the respective offices of the attorney general and governor were justified because the term remaining of the elected governor was less than one year, more or less. All these events of situations resorted to opinions of the OAG and the attorney general. In all these precedent setting cases, the CNMI lacked the specific statutory standards of line of succession as guidance and procedures that would deal and effectively discharge the proper public policy concerning resignation, removal or death of the governor or lieutenant overnor. Now, it is assuring that the OAG and the elected Attorney General may the blindly creating rules in the form of opinion, and also igniting public apprehension suggesting the elected attorney general causing an irresponsible conclusion of law absent and violation of the constitutional standards of Section 7 and 8 of Article III of the CNMI Constitution.

As a lay person, and wishing only to be labeled a lay person in this discourse, the reading of statute or constitution would require the reading of every word in the sentence and every sentence in the paragraph of the written language of the published law. A word by itself does not convey meaning. Meaning of words derived its intended meaning by how the words perform as a "syntactical marker" and "semantic marker" in the sentence. The intended meaning formulated and conveyed by words in the sentence would satisfy the communication being expressed by the writer or speaker. Hence, one like the OAG and the elected attorney general could not just select what seems to justify one's thought process and eliminate the rest as not applicable. Hence, every word in Sections 7 and 8 of the Article III of the CNMI Constitution should count in the absence of statutory standards enacted by the CNMI Legislature. Reliance of the OAG and Attorney General in previous opinions and the base of our crisis today is risky on the ground of irresponsible and blind resolution of the opinion of the AG to the present situation.

In making the recommendation, the OAG and AG consider the "continuity of government" as an issue. Section 8, subsections (a) and (b) of Article lll give partial resolutions to the crisis on hand. The line of succession crisis unfortunately exists because of lack of guidance and procedures. Had the OAG and AG considered the time sensitivity of the placement of a person to the vacant governor's office or position, the CNMI would have been focused and aligned to resolving the line of succession crisis. What question that would urge the OAG and AG to consider is simply: Is the term of the governor's time of office less than one year? Or, is the vacancy occurred early in the term which is more than one year? This whole situation of having to swear in the president of the Senate and person of that office, and the lieutenant overnor and person of that office to the respective offices would not have been necessary. The OAG and AG make more efficient sense by recommending that the line of succession crisis would have been better handled by the Legislature where the making of laws is perfectly settled according to the CNMI Constitution. A rule of succession by the OAG and AG would not amount to being the law of the land where the Constitution dictates and prevails. For this reason, the OAG and AG may have acted hastily, irresponsibly, blindly, and lazily for not taking into consideration of every word and sentence as context for opinions that would suggest and not effectuate as the law in opinions issued or sanctioned under his watch.

The CNMI Constitution does allow for the temporary take over of power of the governorship. The framers of the CNMI Constitution rests the selection of the governor in case of forfeiture of office due to death in the hands of the electorate. No one is irreparable harm because the OAG and AG opined that the acting appointment of the lieutenant governor as acting governor is on hold until statutory enactment of the applicable line of succession and procedures therein form and serve as the rules of engagement in the situation. The line of succession crisis would have been avoided or prevented in all future situations. As electorate this is the constitution, how did the OAG and AG missed these desires. Fueling and aiding in further confusion and obfuscation to all this is like "a pilot without an airplane." The OAG and AG pay attention to the electorate of the CNMI as this is the only standard that would matter in view of the line of succession crisis we are trying to correct at the moment.

On another note, the person who held the office of the lieutenant governor and acting governor during the absence of the Governor due to sickness has not resigned his position of Lt. Governor prior to being sworn to the office of governor. Does that render the line of succession of the president of the Senate and the person of this office, has legitimate assumption of the office to which he was sworn into recently? This may be a minute and insignificant element of the process and unwritten rules of succession that the OAG and AG is professing, it is part of the crisis haunting the legitimacy of this government. This must be resolved quickly, but how? The Legislature is the venue for all these, but nothing is stirring interest at the part of governing in the CNMI government. I and score of others who are only observant to all this wandered and aimlessly guessing why the representation of legislators is no where visible or echoing in the midst of all these.

The only question the electorate need to know and anchor the solution to the line of succession crisis is: Is the term of the Governor›s time in office less than one year or more than one year? The facts of the present situation calls that the term remaining is more than one year. The OAG and AG answer is not an illusive or false response, the last sentence of Section 7 of Article III of the CNMI Constitution applies. Furthermore, the OAG and AG offer solution to clarify and make efficient public policy by urging the CNMI Legislature to effectuate its jurisdiction on this matter. Hence, the AG would have stepped back as far as it is possible from making judicial activist mandate where the OAG and AG ruling by opinions. The court of competent jurisdiction and the CNMI Legislature are the venues to give democracy and the electorate as the rightful owners of the jurisdiction concerning the line of succession that we do not have.

The unintended consequences to all these may have tied and created a sentiment of illegitimacy of office to both persons sworn in to the offices of governor and lieutenant governor. The aggravation to have dealt with social and psychological apprehension by the electorates will escalate to where the succession of offices would be one that is viewed as undeserving and marked with greed and lack of respect for the electorate. All these could have been prevented had the OAG and AG rationalized the situation efficiently knowing the alternative has better acceptance and satisfaction to the electorate. Unfortunately, if this matter is not corrected soon, the history of the CNMI would baptize these succession as an ill gotten windfall. It is preventable, and that would have been the challenge of the OAG and AG. Reversing course is not a bad idea, and the right way is keeping the electorate their due respect and authority to select who they want to be governor for the CNMI community and people.

Francisco R. Agulto
Kannat Tabla

WEIRD

From Page 10

sound of the breeze, waves, birds and everything else was unique music and closure as I take my seat.

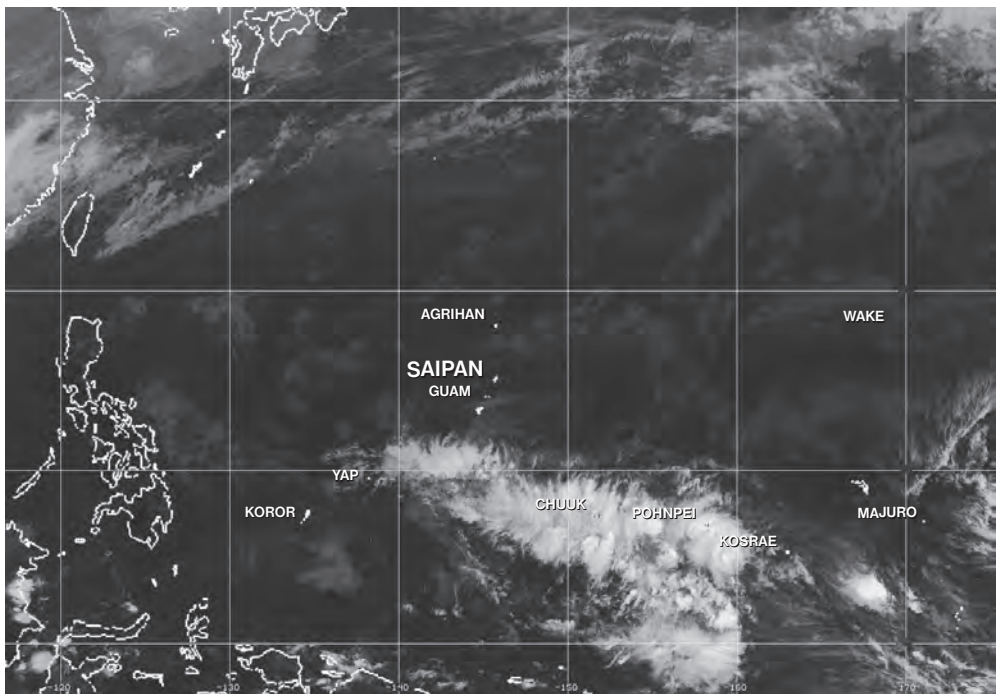
My meditation went well bringing home calm. It's one more trip heading south along scenic beach road to bring closure to this day. Give this exercise a try. You'd be stunned at its benefits throughout the course of the year. I looked around and the sunset has finally said adios to another beautiful day in paradise.

The Weather

5-Day Forecast for Saipan and Tinian

TODAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
Partly cloudy with isolated showers. East winds 10 to 20 mph.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers. East winds 10 to 20 mph.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.
▲86º ▼73º	▲85º ▼73º	▲86º ▼73º	▲86º ▼73º	▲86º ▼73º

Yesterday's Satellite Image



PICTURE TIME: 1:00PM, TUESDAY, JANUARY 5, 2016
Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

A shear line extends eastward from near Wake Island at 18N161E to beyond the date line at 18N. Patchy clouds and showers are present along and up to 150 miles north of this feature. A near-equatorial trough extends southeastward from near Yap island at 10N139E to south of Pohnpei near 2N157E then continues eastward to beyond the date line at 2N. Scattered showers and isolated thunderstorms are occurring from near Yap to Chuuk and Pohnpei within 180 miles of a line from 11N140E to 5N160E and farther south of Pohnpei south of a line from 2N154E to 2N160E. A few more showers and thunderstorms are seen near Butaritari and Tarawa within 90 miles of a line from 3N167E to 1N174E.

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam homepage: www.prh.noaa.gov/guam/

Micronesia

Guam And Rota	Partly Cloudy	▲85	▼77
Palau	Partly Cloudy	▲87	▼77
Yap	Thunderstorms	▲85	▼77
Chuuk	Thunderstorms	▲85	▼80
Pohnpei	Thunderstorms	▲86	▼78
Kosrae	Thunderstorms	▲84	▼79
Majuro	Partly Cloudy	▲84	▼80

Around the Globe

Auckland	Partly Cloudy	▲70	▼61
Beijing	Sunny	▲37	▼16
Hong Kong	Partly Cloudy	▲72	▼60
Honolulu	Mostly Sunny	▲81	▼69
London	Mostly Cloudy	▲50	▼39
Los Angeles	Rain	▲57	▼44
Manila	Mostly Sunny	▲89	▼72
Melbourne	Partly Cloudy	▲81	▼58
Miami	Showers	▲73	▼68
New York	Sunny	▲34	▼25
Osaka	Cloudy	▲55	▼43
Paris	Showers	▲49	▼45
Pusan	Partly Cloudy	▲51	▼29
Rome	Showers	▲58	▼51
Salem	Showers	▲46	▼33
San Francisco	Thundershowers	▲56	▼48
Seoul	Partly Cloudy	▲41	▼23
Tokyo	Cloudy	▲51	▼42
Washington, DC	Sunny	▲35	▼23

NMI CRIME STOPPERS
Anonymous tips can now be submitted through the following:
- Call 234-7272 (PARA) on any telephone
- *11 on any IT&E cellular phone
- Log on to the internet at www.nmicrimestoppers.com

Tides

Saipan Harbor

5:56 AM	Today	High Tide:	1.5 Feet
10:48 AM	Today	Low Tide:	1.1 Feet
4:23 PM	Today	High Tide:	1.8 Feet
11:51 PM	Today	Low Tide:	0.0 Feet

Sunrise/Sunset

Today	6:45 AM	6:00 PM
Thursday	6:45 AM	6:01 PM
Friday	6:45 AM	6:02 PM
Saturday	6:45 AM	6:02 PM
Sunday	6:46 AM	6:03 PM

Moonrise/Moonset

Today	3:01 AM	2:49 AM
Thursday	3:52 AM	3:36 PM
Friday	4:44 AM	4:27 PM
Saturday	5:38 AM	5:20 PM
Sunday	6:31 AM	6:17 PM

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SUBSCRIPTION Published Monday to Friday, *Saipan Tribune* offers door-to-door on-island delivery at an annual rate of $180. For additional subscription information, call (670) 235-8747 or 235-2769, or fax 235-3740.

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FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF DECEMBER 4, 2015

SAIPAN-GUAM (GUM)

UA2924	4:15am	5:05am	Daily
UA2922	8:40am	9:30am	Daily
UA2921	1:30pm	3:10pm	1, 4, 5, 7 via Rota
UA2920	2:20pm	3:10pm	2, 3, 6
UA2928	6:05pm	6:55pm	Daily
UA2926	9:50pm	10:40pm	Daily

GUAM (GUM)-SAIPAN

UA2923	2:45am	3:35am	Daily
UA2925	7:15am	8:05am	Daily
UA2921	12:10pm	1:00pm	1, 4, 5, 7
UA2920	12:10pm	1:50pm	2, 3, 6 via Rota
UA2927	4:45pm	5:35pm	Daily
UA2929	8:30pm	9:20pm	Daily

SAIPAN-ROTA (ROP)

UA2921	1:30pm	2:05pm	1, 4, 5, 7

GUAM (GUM)-ROTA (ROP)

UA2920	12:10pm	12:45pm	2, 3, 6

ROTA (ROP)-GUAM (GUM)

UA2921	2:35pm	3:10pm	1, 4, 5, 7

ROTA (ROP)-SAIPAN

UA2920	1:15pm	1:50pm	2, 3, 6

SAIPAN-NARITA (NRT)

DL297	4:20pm	7:10pm	Daily

NARITA (NRT)-SAIPAN

DL298	10:35am	3:10pm	Daily

SAIPAN-SEOUL (ICN)

OZ626	2:10am	6:00am	1
OZ626	2:50am	6:40am	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
OZ628	3:50am	7:40am	Daily
7C3403	4:35am	8:30am	Daily
7C3401	4:30pm	8:25pm	Daily

SEOUL (ICN)-SAIPAN

7C3402	10:10am	3:30pm	Daily
OZ625	7:40pm	1:00am+1	7
OZ625	8:20pm	1:40am+1	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6
OZ627	9:30pm	2:50am+1	Daily
7C3404	10:10pm	3:30am+1	Daily

SAIPAN-BUSAN (PUS)

OZ608	3:10am	6:20am	4, 7

BUSAN (PUS)-SAIPAN

OZ607	9:00pm	1:50am+1	3, 6

SAIPAN-SHANGHAI (PVG)

3U8648	6:10am	8:40am	1, 4, 5, 7

SHANGHAI (PVG)-SAIPAN

3U8647	10:40pm	5:00am+1	3, 4, 6, 7

SAIPAN-BEIJING (PEK)

MU764	1:30am	5:30am	3, 5, 7

BEIJING (PEK)-SAIPAN

MU763	4:30pm	12:30am+1	2, 4, 6

SAIPAN-GUANGZHOU (CAN)

3U8646	4:20am	7:30am	2, 6

GUANGZHOU (CAN)-SAIPAN

3U8645	7:40pm	3:00am+1	1, 5

SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)

OZ626/701	2:10am	11:15am	1 via ICN
OZ626/701	2:50am	11:15am	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 via ICN
UA2924/191	4:15am	9:00am	3, 6 via GUM
UA2924/PR111	4:15am	9:20am	1, 2, 4, 6, 7 via GUM
UA2924/183	4:15am	9:30pm	2, 5 via GUM
UA2924/183	4:15am	9:50pm	1, 3, 4, 6, 7 via GUM
UA2922/183	8:40am	9:30pm	2, 5 via GUM
UA2922/183	8:40am	9:50pm	1, 3, 4, 6, 7 via GUM
UA2921/183	1:30pm	9:30pm	5 via Rota-GUM
UA2921/183	1:30pm	9:50pm	1, 4, 7 via Rota-GUM
UA5038/183	2:20pm	9:30pm	2 via GUM
UA5038/183	2:20pm	9:50pm	3, 6 via GUM
UA5072/191	9:50pm	7:20am+1	1, 6 via GUM

MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN

UA190/2929	9:55am	9:20pm	2, 6, 7 via GUM
UA190/2929	10:00am	9:20pm	3 via GUM
OZ702/625	12:30pm	1:00am+1	7 via ICN
OZ702/625	12:30pm	1:40am+1	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 via ICN
OZ702/627	12:30pm	2:50am+1	Daily via ICN
PR110/UA2925	10:05pm	8:05am+1	1, 3, 5, 6, 7 via GUM
UA184/2925	10:55pm	8:05am+1	1, 3, 4, 6, 7 via GUM
UA184/2921	10:55pm	1:00pm+1	3, 4, 6, 7 via GUM
UA184/2920	10:55pm	1:50pm+1	1 via GUM-Rota
UA184/2927	10:55pm	5:35pm+1	1, 3, 4, 6, 7 via GUM
UA184/2929	10:55pm	9:20pm+1	1, 3, 4, 6, 7 via GUM
UA184/2925	11:59pm	8:05am+1	2, 5 via GUM
UA184/2920	11:59pm	1:50pm+1	2, 5 via GUM-Rota
UA184/2927	11:59pm	5:35pm+1	2, 5 via GUM
UA184/2929	11:59pm	9:20pm+1	2, 5 via GUM

SAIPAN-HONG KONG (HKG)

OZ626/721	2:10am	11:50am	1 via ICN
OZ626/721	2:50am	11:50am	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 via ICN
OZ628/721	3:50am	12:50am	Daily via ICN
UA2924/159	4:15am	10:35pm	1, 3, 5, 6 via GUM
UA2922/159	8:40am	10:35pm	1, 3, 5, 6 via GUM
UA2921/159	1:30pm	10:35pm	1, 5 via Rota-GUM
UA2920/159	2:20pm	10:35pm	3, 6 via GUM

HONG KONG (HKG)-SAIPAN

OZ722/625	1:15pm	1:00am+1	7 via ICN
OZ722/625	1:15pm	1:40am+1	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 via ICN
OZ724/627	2:20pm	2:50am+1	Daily via ICN
UA116/2925	10:55pm	8:05am+1	1, 3, 5, 6 via GUM
UA116/2921	10:55pm	1:00pm+1	3, 6 via GUM
UA116/2920	10:55pm	1:50pm+1	1, 5 via GUM-Rota
UA116/2927	10:55pm	5:35pm+1	1, 3, 5, 6 via GUM
UA116/2929	10:55pm	9:20pm+1	1, 3, 5, 6 via GUM

LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); 3U: Sichuan Airlines; MU: China Eastern; UA: United Airlines; DL: Delta Airlines; OZ: Asiana; 7C: Jeju AirETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)

STAR MARIANAS AIR, INC.

TINIAN TO SAIPAN

DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
6:30AM	6:45AM	Mon, Tue,Wed, Thu, Fri, Sat
7:30AM	7:45AM	Daily
8:30AM	8:45AM	Daily
9:30AM	9:45AM	Daily
10:30AM	10:45AM	Daily
11:30AM	11:45AM	Daily
12:30NN	12:45NN	Daily
1:30PM	1:45PM	Daily
2:30PM	2:45PM	Daily
3:30PM	3:45PM	Daily
4:30PM	4:45PM	Daily
5:30PM	5:45PM	Daily
6:30PM	6:45PM	Daily

SAIPAN TO TINIAN

DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
7:00AM	7:15AM	Daily
8:00AM	8:15AM	Daily
9:00AM	9:15AM	Daily
10:00AM	10:15AM	Daily
11:00AM	11:15AM	Daily
12:00NN	12:15NN	Daily
1:00PM	1:15PM	Daily
2:00PM	2:15PM	Daily
3:00PM	3:15PM	Daily
4:00PM	4:15PM	Daily
5:00PM	5:15PM	Daily
6:00PM	6:15PM	Daily

SAIPAN TO ROTA

DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
7:45AM	8:15AM	Mon, Tues,Wed, Thu, Fri, Sat
4:00PM	4:30PM	Mon, Tues,Wed, Thu, Fri, Sat

ROTA TO SAIPAN

DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
8:30AM	9:00AM	Mon, Tues,Wed, Thu, Fri, Sat
4:45PM	5:15PM	Mon, Tues,Wed, Thu, Fri, Sat

‘BSI gave me opportunity to help my family, community’

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Alexis P. Cabrera has been with Best Sunshine International’s corporate social responsibility team since October 2015.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
2. The 25-year-old Portland State University alumna and current project manager for Best Sunshine International’s CSR team is a homegrown successful young leader.

To some, there is always that common fear of coming home due to the uncertainty of finding a job or the lack of career opportunities.

Best Sunshine International, Ltd’s corporate social responsibility project manager Alexis Palacios Cabrera’s story of returning home to the islands is about a personal goal and passion of giving back to her family and community.

And hers is a story of success.

The valedictorian and an alumna from Kagman High School’s class of 2008 has always been known by her peers for her tenacity, hard work, and diligence in anything she pursues. Shortly after high school, she made the brave decision to leave the comfort of her home and continue to pursue her education in Portland, Oregon, where she spent the last seven years before returning to the islands.

“I was driven to pursue my education because I wanted to return to the CNMI to give back and help our community. Living in a region that is so distant from the mainland limits career exploration and opportunities,” said Cabrera. “At first, the transition from Saipan to Portland was hard because I was out of my element. I had to adjust and adapt to the change in culture, environment, and location. Many people believed in me and encouraged me through the years, and that is what drove me to work hard and return home.”

By June 2013, Cabrera had completed her Bachelor of Science in Psychology and Social Science and went on to pursue a Master of Arts in Educational Leadership and Policy, which she completed by June 2015. Cabrera mirrors what the younger generation of today is: Accomplished, educated, and driven.

She made the bold decision shortly after graduating from Portland State University to return to the CNMI to begin her career and follow suit with her promise to give back to the community.

“Though I always knew that I would return home, I had fears about finding a job when I returned, especially since the island was still recovering from Typhoon Soudelor. I had submitted several job applications, but did not find a job prior to returning,” said Cabrera.

Although she was unsure of what opportunities lay ahead, Cabrera bid adieu to her life in Oregon and returned to Saipan with sincere confidence that she made the right decision.

“Picking up and moving after seven years of being in Oregon was hard, though I was coming back home to be with my parents and sister, it was difficult leaving my grandmother and other family members in Oregon. However, I knew that by coming home I would be able to help my family,” said Cabrera.

It was only a few days after her arrival that she had stumbled upon her first job opportunity.

“Two days after arriving on Saipan, I was introduced to Tao Xing, the chief service officer of Best Sunshine International, during an outing with friends and conversations of job opportunities arose,” said Cabrera. “After several meetings, I began working for BSI within my first week of being back home.”

Cabrera shared of how fortunate she was to have found a job so quickly after arriving because it gave her a sense of security and stability as well as an opportunity to jumpstart her career.

“Best Sunshine has provided our people with an array of job opportunities to better establish themselves and their career. Through my job with BSI I have been able to help my family out in more ways than one, for example, helping both physically and financially. Having this job enables me to give back to my parents and to my island,” said Cabrera.

She was hired and is now a CSR project manager and work directly alongside the community and serving them rather than being constrained to a desk all day.

“What I enjoy most about my position is being able to go out into the community and effect positive change. I love learning about the different programs, causes, and organizations out there and being able to offer our support. These past few months, we have worked with numerous organizations and agencies and I have met so many wonderful people in the community,” said Cabrera.

She is responsible in overseeing, planning, and implementing projects that better serve the community. Cabrera is also not afraid to get her hands dirty and believes in working side-by-side her colleagues in all projects executed by CSR.

“To the Corporate Social Responsibility team, thank you all so much for the hard work and dedication you have invested and for making my time back home fun and exciting.”

“It has been a blessing being back home and being able to give back to our island. I sincerely look forward for what is to come for not only myself, but for the CNMI as Best Sunshine continues to grow,” Cabrera added. ***(PR)***

Whispering Palms asking businesses for financial assistance

By DAISY DEMAPAN
daisy_demapan@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

One of the oldest private schools on island is pleading to the business community for financial assistance this school year.

Whispering Palms School board member Kuen-Hee Han and parent Lisa McWilliams have taken it upon themselves to get the word out to keep the school functioning.

“This school is different. All teachers have a master’s degree or equivalent and our philosophy is to raise kids who are responsible for their community. We invite [interested donors] to check out the school,” Han says.

The school currently serves students from kindergarten to 8th grade.

McWilliams, a parent of three children, with two children enrolled at Whispering Palms says the school was her top choice after moving from Northern Ireland to the island.

“The school relies 100 percent on tuition fees, fundraising, and education tax credits,” she said.

McWilliams added that the school relies on businesses for aid, and noted that tax credits are the best way to ensure school funding.

“Everyone who owns a business on Saipan can donate $419 per month or $5,000 per year,” she says, since ETC allows businesses a way to give back to education institutions of their choice and apply it against the tax liability of a business for the tax year.

According to principal Jennifer Slack, “the CNMI has a unique law that allows businesses to donate up to $5,000 of their BGRT tax to the school of their choosing. Public Law 10-73, known as the Education Tax Credit Law, has been in effect in the CNMI since 1997. This progressive law allows for a direct and affordable way to donate to the educational institutions of the CNMI. When a business makes an ETC donation in place of their tax, the business receives a tax credit for their contribution. This means that any amount you contribute to the school counts as if you had paid that amount towards your taxes. Our school depends on these funds to provide students with a high quality learning environment,” she said

The school notes that they were not eligible for Federal Emergency Management Agency assistance after Typhoon Soudelor but is looking to make repairs to their school environment.

Whispering Palms is a private, non-profit located on Navy Hill. With a small student-to-teacher ratio they strive to offer the highest quality educational experience. For more information on how you can help, call Slack at 323-7451 or email whisperingpalmsofsaipan@gmail.

Fiji assessment teams prepare to head to Lau Group

SUVA, Fiji (Fiji Times) —A government assessment team will depart for Lau on Thursday to conduct an assessment on cyclone damage reported to the Commissioner Eastern’s Office.

Provincial administrator Lau Eliki Masa said the teams would include officers from various government departments such as health officers, agricultural officers, those from the Department of Infrastructure and other agencies.

[PIR editor’s note: On Jan. 5, 2016 the Fiji Timesreported that ‘The assessment team scheduled to leave for Lau on Thursday will be taking relief supplies including medicine, food ration, water tablets and other relief items that are readily available. ... Director NDMO Akapusi Tuifagalele said so far they had received reports that two houses on Vatoa Island were damaged by strong winds and rain and a lot of farms and plantations were severely damaged. ... He said food security on affected islands is a priority for Government.’]

“The weather has cleared up in the Lau Group. This is especially for the islands that were in the direct path of Tropical Cyclone Ula.

“In terms of damage, there wasn’t much done on infrastructure but most of the farms were damaged by the strong winds and heavy downpour,” Mr Masa said.

He said all reports provided through information gathered from the village headmen of Ono-i-Lau, Vatoa, Moce, Komo, Namuka, Ogea, Fulaga and Kabara showed mostly root crops were damaged.

“We are trying to deploy one assessment team on Thursday. The reports provided to us from the village headmen will be our initial damage assessment reports. We’re now working on securing a government team to take the assessment team across to these islands,” he said.

NAVFAC accepting public comments for NBGTS construction

PEARL HARBOR-HICKAM—Naval Facilities Engineering Command (NAVFAC) Pacific announced today the start of a 45-day public comment period for the determination of effects of the Finegayan Forest Enhancement Ungulate Fencing Project located on Naval Base Guam Telecommunications Site (NBGTS).

Comments are being accepted through Feb. 19, 2016, Chamorro Standard Time. This project, J-001B Finegayan Forest Enhancement Ungulate Fencing PA Memo #1, proposes construction of ungulate fencing (hooved animals) in an area planned for forest enhancement of the northern portion of NBGTS and a southwestern portion of Northwest Field on Andersen Air Force Base (AAFB) in Dededo, Guam.

The information can be found on the NAVFAC Pacific Cultural Information (CRI) website at http://go.usa.gov/kZWG. (Please note the URL is case sensitive). Comments may be submitted via email to criwebcomment@navy.mil.

Those without internet access can obtain a hard copy of the PA Memos from the Guam Historic Resources Division, located at 490 Chalan Palasyo, Agana Heights, 96910 (in the Department of Parks and Recreation Office). ***(PR)***

Guam Public Health awarded $1M for children immunizations, vaccines

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Congresswoman Madeleine Z. Bordallo today announced that the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has awarded the Guam Department of Public Health and Social Services $1,057,767 in federal grant assistance. The grant was awarded through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases and will be used DPHSS’s Immunization and Vaccines for Children Program.

“Vaccinating children is crucial to protecting our children, as well as our entire community from fatal diseases and health conditions. This grant will help Guam Public Health provide free vaccinations to children who would otherwise not be vaccinated because of an inability to pay. I look forward to Guam Public Heath continuing to provide these services to our community.” ***(PR)***

Business

Oil prices fall even with spat between 2 big producers

DALLAS (AP)—It turns out that thanks to a glut of crude, even tension between two big oil-producing countries isn't enough to drive prices higher.

Oil futures spiked briefly on Monday after the news that Saudi Arabia would cut diplomatic ties with Iran, a development that could be seen as a threat to oil supplies.

Investors quickly discounted those fears, however. After rising by $1.35, the price of benchmark U.S. crude ended the day down 28 cents to $36.76 a barrel on the New York Mercantile Exchange. Brent crude, reflecting the price of international oils, dipped 6 cents to close at $37.22 a barrel in London.

While oil markets were seesawing, stock markets sagged on evidence that the global economy might be weaker than expected this year. The Dow Jones industrial average lost 276 points, or 1.6 percent, and was down 468 points earlier in the day.

New reports indicated that manufacturing is continuing to struggle, with factory activity falling in December for the second straight month in the U.S. and the 10th straight month in China.

AP

In this Dec. 13, 2015 file photo the sun sets behind an oil pump in the desert oil fields of Sakhir, Bahrain.

Slow growth means that the current oversupply of oil could be more stubborn than expected. Government figures show that the stockpile of U.S. crude oil grew by 2.6 million barrels during the week ended Dec. 25 and were 9.9 million barrels higher than a year ago.

Oil prices are likely to remain about where they are until either production drops or the world economy perks up and drives demand higher.

Investors may have regarded the flash of tension between the Saudis and the Iranians over Saudi Arabia's execution of an opposition Shiite cleric as merely saber-rattling. Stewart Glickman, an analyst with S&P Capital IQ, said geopolitical risk has lost some of its ability to influence on oil prices.

"It is maybe a sense of security from the marketplace that with this seeming glut of crude oil that you can have tensions in Middle East and they don't count for as much as they used to three or four years ago," he said in an interview.

The explanation lies partly in robust production from the U.S., Glickman said. Saudi officials are reluctant to cut production in a bid to raise prices because they'll just concede sales to U.S. producers who will fill the void in supply.

Iran wants to regain some oil exports that it lost while under economic sanctions, soon to be lifted, for its nuclear program. Judith Dwarkin, chief economist at ITG Investment Research, said that the confrontation with Saudi Arabia makes the Saudis unlikely to offset Iranian increases by trimming their own production—potentially adding to the glut.

Then there is the question of demand. Weak manufacturing numbers and a plunge in the Shanghai Composite stock index raised new concern about energy demand in China, the world's second-biggest economy.

The U.S. Energy Information Administration forecasts that the average price of U.S. benchmark crude this year will rise about 4 percent over 2015.

If that is correct, American motorists will continue getting a break on gasoline compared with prices not long ago. On Monday, the nationwide average price for a gallon of regular was $1.99, according to the auto club AAA - 22 cents cheaper than a year ago.

The Energy Information Administration estimates that the average U.S. household saved about $660 on cheaper gasoline last year, compared with 2014.

US sues VW over emissions-cheating software in diesel cars

WASHINGTON (AP)—The Justice Department sued Volkswagen on Monday over emissions-cheating software found in nearly 600,000 vehicles sold in the United States, potentially exposing the company to billions of dollars in penalties for clean air violations.

The civil complaint against the German automaker, filed on behalf of the Environmental Protection Agency in U.S. District Court in Detroit, alleges the company illegally installed software designed to make its "clean diesel" engines pass federal emissions standards while undergoing laboratory testing. The vehicles then switched off those measures in real-world driving conditions, spewing harmful gases at up to 40 times what is allowed under federal environmental standards.

"Car manufacturers that fail to properly certify their cars and that defeat emission control systems breach the public trust, endanger public health and disadvantage competitors," John C. Cruden, the assistant attorney general for the Justice Department's Environment and Natural Resources Division, said in a statement.

"The United States will pursue all appropriate remedies against Volkswagen to redress the violations of our nation's clean air laws alleged in the complaint," he said.

The company is in the midst of negotiating a massive mandatory recall with U.S. regulators and potentially faces more than $18 billion in fines for violations of the federal Clean Air Act.

The company and its executives could also still face separate criminal charges, while a raft of private class-action lawsuits filed by angry VW owners are pending.

Volkswagen Group of America spokeswoman Jeannine Ginivan said Monday that the company "will continue to cooperate with all government agencies investigating these matters."

In past statements, high-ranking VW executives have sought to blame only a small number of software developers in Germany for the suspect computer code designed to trick emissions tests. The company has hired a U.S.-based law firm to conduct an internal investigation into the scheme. The findings of that review have not yet been made public.

Factory slumps in US and China heighten global economy fears

WASHINGTON (AP)—Fears escalated Monday that the global economy could struggle more than expected this year—a prospect that contributed to a plunge in financial markets.

The anxiety was heightened by reports that manufacturers extended their slumps last month in the United States and China, the world's two largest economies. Factory activity contracted for a second straight month in the United States and for a 10th straight month in China.

By midafternoon, the Dow Jones industrial average had sunk more than 400 points—over 2 percent—though the fall was also due in part to rising tensions in the Middle East. Chinese stocks fell 7 percent before trading was halted.

The DAX index in Germany, whose export-led economy is sensitive to China's prospects, tumbled 4.3 percent. Britain's FTSE 100 fell 2.4 percent, France's CAC 40 2.5 percent.

The manufacturing data made clear that the troubles that weighed on U.S. factories last year have yet to ease. Sluggish economies in major markets—from China to Europe to Japan—have depressed U.S. exports. That trend has been worsened by a strong dollar, which has made U.S. goods more expensive for foreigners.

Not all the news was bad. A cheaper euro has helped European manufacturing, which expanded at the fastest pace in 20 months in December, according to data firm Markit.

Still, China's persistent sluggishness may be causing broader damage than previously thought, analysts say. China's government is trying to shift its economy toward domestic consumption and away from a reliance on exports and investment in roads, factories and real estate.

Yet that transformation has proved difficult: China's growth in the July-September quarter fell to 6.9 percent from a year earlier, the slowest pace in six years.

China's deceleration has been hugely disruptive for countries that have long exported commodities such as oil, copper and other metals to the Chinese market. China consumes, for example, about 60 percent of the world's iron ore, which is used to make steel. China's declining appetite for such commodities has slowed growth in Australia, Brazil and Malaysia, among other economies.

BUSINESS BRIEFS

Faraday reveals sleek, sporty concept car in Vegas

LAS VEGAS (AP)—The automotive future according to Faraday Futures looks an awful lot like a Corvette crossed with the Batmobile. The California-based company debuted its sleek electric concept car Monday night during the annual CES show that focuses on consumer gadgets and has increasingly become a way for carmakers to show off their latest technological feats. The 18-month-old company that has remained much of a mystery until recently revealing its primary backer, a Chinese billionaire, won $335 million in tax incentives from the state of Nevada to build its first manufacturing facility in a hard-hit Las Vegas suburb. The company is dubbing Monday's debut FFZero1. The company's senior vice president of research and development Nick Sampson says he expects the first production car to be produced in two years.

General Motors invests $500m in Lyft, forms partnership

DETROIT (AP)—The automotive industry is placing its biggest bet yet that using a device to hail a ride—with or without a driver—is the future of transportation. General Motors Co. said Monday it is investing $500 million in ride-hailing company Lyft Inc. and forming an unprecedented partnership that could eventually lead to on-demand, self-driving cars. It's the largest investment yet by a traditional automaker in a new mobility company, and is an acknowledgement by GM that the transportation landscape is changing fast. "We see the world of mobility changing more in the next five years than it has in the last 50," GM President Dan Ammann told The Associated Press. GM made the investment as part of a $1 billion round of fundraising by Lyft.

General Motors CEO Mary Barra adds chairman to her title

General Motors CEO Mary Barra is taking on the added role of chairman at the nation's largest automaker. The company's directors Monday unanimously elected her to lead the board, effective immediately. She replaces former Cummins Inc. Chairman and CEO Theodore Solso as GM's chairman. He will stay on as the board's lead independent director, the company said Monday in a statement. Barra, 54, took over as CEO in January of 2014, becoming the first woman to lead a major global automaker. Her appointment came shortly before GM became embroiled in a scandal over faulty small-car ignition switches. But she led GM through the crisis and a related series of embarrassing safety recalls. ***(AP)***

Nation

Obama moves to require background checks for more gun sales

WASHINGTON (AP)—President Barack Obama moved Monday to expand background checks to cover more firearms sold at gun shows, online and anywhere else, aiming to curb a scourge of gun violence despite unyielding opposition to new laws in Congress.

Obama's plan to broaden background checks forms the centerpiece of a broader package of gun control measures the president plans to take on his own in his final year in office. Although Obama can't unilaterally change gun laws, the president is hoping that beefing up enforcement of existing laws can prevent at least some gun deaths in a country rife with them.

"This is not going to solve every violent crime in this country," Obama said. Still, he added, "It will potentially save lives and spare families the pain of these extraordinary losses."

Under current law, only federally licensed gun dealers must conduct background checks on buyers, but many who sell guns at flea markets, on websites or in other informal settings don't register as dealers. Gun control advocates say that loophole is exploited to skirt the background check requirement.

Now, the Justice Department's Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives will issue updated guidance that says the government should deem anyone "in the business" of selling guns to be a dealer, regardless of where he or she sells the guns. To that end, the government will consider other factors, including how many guns a person sells and how frequently, and whether those guns are sold for a profit.

The executive actions on gun control fall far short of what Obama and likeminded lawmakers attempted to accomplish with legislation in 2013, after a massacre at a Connecticut elementary school that shook the nation's conscience. Even still, the more modest measures were sure to spark legal challenges from those who oppose any new impediments to buying guns.

"We're very comfortable that the president can legally take these actions," said Attorney General Loretta Lynch.

Obama's announcement was hailed by Democratic lawmakers and gun control groups like the Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence, which claimed Obama was making history with "bold and meaningful action" that would make all Americans safer. Hillary Clinton, at a rally in Iowa, said she was "so proud" of Obama but warned that the next president could easily undo his changes.

"I won't wipe it away," Clinton said.

But Republicans were quick to accuse Obama of gross overreach. Sen Bob Corker, R-Tenn., denounced Obama's steps as "divisive and detrimental to real solutions."

"I will work with my colleagues to respond appropriately to ensure the Constitution is respected," Corker said.

Far from mandating background checks for all gun sales, the new guidance still exempts collectors and gun hobbyists, and the exact definition of who must register as a dealer and conduct background checks remains exceedingly vague.

AP

Kayla Brown, left, wears her gun on her hip while working at the Spring Guns and Ammo store Monday, Jan. 4, 2016, in Spring, Texas.

Source: Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence
Graphic: Tribune News Service

Wildlife refuge occupation part of long-running lands fight

BURNS, Ore. (AP)—The small group of armed anti-government activists occupying a remote wildlife preserve in Oregon's high desert gave visitors free access to the snowy site Monday, allowing some local residents and ranchers in to satisfy their curiosity or show support.

The group also appeared to be trying to keep the site tidy, picking up cigarette butts from the ground and keeping vehicle and foot traffic primarily to roads and pathways. Federal authorities made no immediate attempt to retake the headquarters of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge, which about two dozen activists seized over the weekend as part of a decades-long fight over public lands in the West.

There appeared to be no urgent reason for federal officials to move in. No one has been hurt. No one is being held hostage. And the refuge is a bleak and forbidding stretch of wilderness about 300 miles from Portland, and it's the middle of winter.

Some have complained that the government's response to the situation in Oregon would have been more severe had the occupants been Muslim or other minorities.

But others said from a tactical standpoint, the government's cautious response would make sense no matter who was holed up in the government building in the reserve.

Meanwhile, the group said it wants an inquiry into whether the government is forcing ranchers off their land after the father and son who were ordered back to prison for arson on federal grazing lands reported to a federal facility in California Monday.

The demanded a government response within five days related to the ranchers' extended sentences.

Ammon Bundy—one of the sons of rancher Cliven Bundy, who was involved in a 2014 Nevada standoff with the government over grazing rights—told reporters that Dwight Hammond and his son, Steven Hammond, were treated unfairly.

The Hammonds were convicted of arson three years ago for fires on federal land in 2001 and 2006, one of which was set to cover up deer poaching, according to prosecutors. They said they lit the fires to reduce the growth of invasive plants and protect their property from wildfires.

The men served their original sentences—three months for Dwight and one year for Steven. But an appeals court judge ruled the terms fell short of minimum sentences that require them to serve about four more years.

Their sentences have been a rallying cry for the group, whose mostly male members said they want federal lands turned over to local authorities so people can use them free of U.S. oversight.

Levees among possible cause of more frequent flooding

ST. LOUIS (AP)—The Mississippi River floods more often than it used to, and at higher levels. Richard Knaup thinks he knows why.

The veteran emergency management director for southeast Missouri's Cape Girardeau County is fighting floods again, just as he did last year, and the year before that, and the year before that.

"Prior to levee building, the river was a wild thing and it spread out between the river bluffs," Knaup said Monday. "Now we've tried to tame it. Mother Nature and Old Man River will fight back."

The rains that caused this winter's flood, blamed already for 25 deaths and damage to hundreds of homes and businesses, ended a week ago, but the water was still rising Monday in southern Missouri and Illinois. The Illinois River, which joins the Mississippi above St. Louis, was expected to reach near-record crests this week between the Illinois towns of Havana and Valley City, creating "a very dangerous situation" as levees there become saturated, said Steve Buan, a National Weather Service hydrologist.

Several other states along the Mississippi River were still bracing for the crest, which was flowing past Tiptonville, Tennessee, and expected to reach Memphis on Thursday at 6.5 feet above flood stage.

For many in the flood-weary Midwest, fighting the river has become an almost annual event. In Cape Girardeau County, all but five of the 32 highest crests on record have occurred since the record-setting 1993 flood, and four of the top 10 have happened since 2011.

So what's going on? Unusual weather patterns are a symptom of global warming, but experts also blame more immediate developments, including efforts to protect growing towns and cities from the rivers both that sustain and threaten them.

Bob Holmes, a Missouri-based hydrologic engineer for the U.S. Geological Survey, says the Midwest has received far more rainfall than normal over the past quarter of a century, and more extreme rainstorms, such as the three-day downpour Dec. 26-28 that dumped 10 inches of rain over much of Missouri and Illinois and caused this latest mess. But urban sprawl also increases flood risk, he said.

"Farm fields will soak up water," Holmes said. "If you pave it with concrete or asphalt, all of a sudden that is a very efficient conduit right into the streams and you get increased flooding."

Officers quickly rejected suicide in Illinois cop's death

CHICAGO (AP)—At least one officer responding to the fatal shooting of a northern Illinois police officer who staged his suicide to make it look like homicide thought he might have killed himself, while others quickly rejected the idea, newly released documents show.

Fox Lake Lt. Charles Joseph Gliniewicz's Sept. 1 death touched off an intense manhunt involving hundreds of officers and raised fears of cop-killers on the loose.

Fox Lake officials late Monday released investigative summaries of interviews with responding officers in response to a public records request by The Associated Press. The interviews were conducted by the Lake County Major Crimes Task Force on the day of Gliniewicz's death and in the following weeks. They became part of a larger investigation that eventually concluded the officer who was known in the rural village as "G.I. Joe" had shot himself because his theft of thousands of dollars from a youth program was about to be exposed.

A rookie officer who arrived at the scene noted the position of Gliniewicz's right hand—"as if he was holding a gun"—as a possible indication of suicide, the documents show. But that was rejected by a sergeant, who later said Gliniewicz was too vain to kill himself.

"When asked what she thought may have happened to Lt. Gliniewicz, Sgt. (Dawn) Deservi said she didn't think he would do something like this to himself because he was too vein (sic) of an individual," task force investigators wrote. "If he missed and caused himself to be paralyzed, he wouldn't be able to live with himself in that condition."

Minutes before he died, Gliniewicz had radioed that he was chasing three suspicious men into a swampy area. Backup officers followed a trail of equipment to the Army veteran's body, about 50 yards from his squad car.

The interviews with the first officers on the scene did not create any major leads, Lake County Sheriff's Detective Chris Covelli, a spokesman for a task force that investigated the death, said Monday. The officers' accounts were a "piece of the puzzle," Covelli said, but what Gliniewicz said on the radio about chasing suspects and other evidence outweighed the initial conflicting perceptions, which included the dead officer's tension with a new village administrator.

Asia

US opposes China's runway test on artificial island

WASHINGTON (AP)—The United States said Monday that China's recent test of a newly completed runway on one of seven islands Beijing has constructed in the disputed South China Sea raises tensions and threatens regional stability.

State Department spokesman John Kirby reiterated a U.S. call for a halt to land reclamation and militarization of outposts in those waters, where China and five other Asian governments have competing territorial claims.

China's landing of an aircraft at Fiery Cross Reef has already drawn criticism from its neighbors. Vietnam protested last week, saying China's move violated Hanoi's sovereignty. It demanded that China stop such actions, but Beijing rejected Hanoi's protest. The Philippines, a U.S. ally, said Monday it was also considering a formal protest.

AP
A man reads a local newspaper saying "Japan and Philippine give snide comments against China following a test fly in the South China Sea" at a brokerage house in Beijing, Tuesday, Jan. 5, 2016.

Tensions have risen in the last two years after China transformed disputed reefs in the Spratly Island chain into islands that rival claimants fear Beijing could use to project its military might far from the Chinese mainland and threaten their territories.

"To begin flight operations at this new airfield in a disputed area raises tensions and threatens regional stability," Kirby told reporters in Washington. He said claimants should instead focus on reaching agreement on acceptable behavior in disputed areas.

"We have made this case clear repeatedly, and we will continue to make it," he said.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said Saturday that China deployed a "civil aircraft" on the island, which it calls Yongshu Jiao, to determine whether the new airfield in what she said was Chinese territory conformed to civil aviation standards.

The diplomatic tussle that China's action has sparked presages a continuation this year of tense exchanges, mainly among China, Vietnam and the Philippines, over long-disputed and potentially oil- or gas-rich offshore territories also claimed by Taiwan, Malaysia and Brunei.

The South China Sea has also become a growing source of tension between Washington and Beijing. While the United States is not a claimant state, it says it has a national interest in the peaceful settlement of disputes in the South China Sea and in freedom of navigation in waters that are critical for world trade.

In October, the U.S. deployed a guided missile destroyer near a different reef to challenge Beijing's claim of sovereignty in the waters around the artificial islands. China blasted the U.S. action and warned Washington not to repeat the maneuver.

80-year-old Tokyo fish market holds final New Year auction

TOKYO (AP)—It's among the biggest of Japan's many New Year holiday rituals: Early on Tuesday, a huge, glistening tuna was auctioned for about 14 million Japanese yen ($118,000) at Tokyo's 80-year-old Tsukiji market. Next year, if all goes as planned, the tradition won't be quite the same.

The world's biggest and most famous fish and seafood market is due to move in November to a massive complex further south in Tokyo Bay, making way for redevelopment of the prime slice of downtown real estate.

The closure of the Tsukiji market will punctuate the end of the post-war era for many of the mom-and-pop shops just outside the main market that peddle a cornucopia of sea-related products, from dried squid and seaweed to whale bacon and caviar.

The auction is typical of Japan's penchant for fresh starts at the beginning of the year—the first visit of the year to a shrine and the first dream of the year are other important firsts—and it's meant to set an auspicious precedent for the 12 months to come.

Sushi restaurateur Kiyoshi Kimura has prevailed in most of the recent new year auctions, and he did so again this year in the bidding for a 200-kilogram (440-pound) tuna.

In 2013, a bidding war drove his record winning bid to 154.4 million yen (at today's exchange rates about $1.3 million) for a 222-kilogram (490-pound) fish.

That drew complaints that prices had soared way out of line, and the winning price in 2014 was dramatically lower. Last year, a 180.4-kilogramme (380-pound) tuna caught off Japan's northern region of Aomori fetched a winning bid of 4.51 million yen ($37,480).

Japanese eat about 80 percent of all bluefin tuna caught worldwide, and stocks of all three bluefin species—the Pacific, Southern and Atlantic—have fallen over the past 15 years amid overfishing.

But while the new year and daily tuna auctions are Tsukiji's best-known events, the market is about much more than just tuna.

On a recent year-end day, shop owners in rubber boots and aprons were rushing to clean up and sell off the last of their inventory, as the last few hundred shoppers milled around hunting for bargains.

Already, some shops outside the market have been razed and a new building that will house a smaller "outer market" is under construction. Conceptual drawings from the Tokyo city government show the 23-hectare (nearly 57-acre) market site that fronts the Sumida River's outlet into Tokyo Bay being transformed into an open waterfront park surrounded by greenery, with a wide shopping plaza and a passenger terminal for tourist ferries traversing the bay and river.

Missing booksellers have Hong Kong leader 'highly concerned'

HONG KONG (AP)—Hong Kong's leader said Monday that he was "highly concerned" about the recent disappearances of people associated with a publishing company in the city that specializes in titles critical of mainland China's leadership.

Chief Executive Leung Chun-ying told reporters there's no evidence so far to support suspicions that mainland security agents were involved.

Five people associated with Hong Kong publisher Mighty Current and its Causeway Bay Bookstore have vanished in recent months.

The disappearances have raised fears that Beijing is tightening its grip on Hong Kong, a semiautonomous territory that enjoys civil liberties such as freedom of the press that don't exist on the mainland.

The latest and most startling case came last week, when the publisher's chief editor, Lee Bo, failed to return home after visiting a book storage warehouse.

Four other people linked to the company went missing in October, but they were last seen either in mainland China or Thailand.

In Lee's case, his wife told local media that he had called her from a number that indicated he was in Shenzhen, the mainland Chinese city next door to Hong Kong. That has led many to suspect that Chinese agents crossed over into Hong Kong, snatched Lee and spirited him to the mainland.

Late Monday, police issued a statement saying the missing person's report involving Lee had been withdrawn, but that police would continue to investigate. It was not clear if that meant Lee had been located, and his wife could not be reached for comment.

"The government and I are highly concerned about the case" of the missing booksellers, Leung said.

Hong Kong's leader also said there's "no indication" yet that Chinese agents are involved, and appealed for information from anyone who could help give a better idea of the missing people's whereabouts or the reasons for the their disappearance.

"If mainland Chinese law enforcement personnel are carrying out duties in Hong Kong, it would be unacceptable because it goes against the Basic Law," the mini-constitution under which Beijing agreed to uphold the "one country, two systems" principle after taking control of the city from Britain in 1997, Leung said.

The Chinese foreign ministry in Beijing said it had no information on the case.

ASIAN BRIEFS

Guns silent as Indian forces search Indian air force base

PATHANKOT, India (AP)—There was no gunfire early Tuesday as troops search an Indian air base on the fourth day of a siege looking for a possible sixth gunman involved in a weekend attack that left seven troops dead. Air force spokeswoman Rochelle D'Silva said Tuesday "there has been no firing since Monday night at the base" near the border with Pakistan. Indian security forces say they have killed five attackers, with the last one shot dead on Monday. The search operations at Pathankot air force base will continue until all areas have been completely secured, Maj. Gen. Dushyant Singh, from India's National Security Guard, told reporters. The attack has dragged on since early Saturday morning as troops struggled to find the heavily armed attackers in the sprawling base. At least twice it has appeared that the attack had ended but fresh gunfire and explosions erupted both times. Four attackers were reported killed by Saturday evening, and at least two were said to have been still exchanging gunfire with troops as of Monday morning. By evening one had been shot dead, Singh said.

Suu Kyi: Incoming government to prioritize peace in Myanmar

YANGON, Myanmar (AP)—Aung San Suu Kyi said Monday that building peace will be the first priority of her pro-democracy party's incoming administration when it replaces Myanmar's military-backed government soon. Suu Kyi spoke at the headquarters of her National League for Democracy to mark the nation's Independence Day. She said the incoming government would seek to improve a ceasefire agreement the outgoing regime signed in October with eight ethnic minorities that have long fought for greater autonomy. The ethnic rebellions remain a threat to the country's unity, since several larger ethnic guerrilla armies declined to sign the agreement. Fighting persists in some border areas. Though largely an agreement to keep talking, the agreement could pave the way for a more comprehensive political settlement in the future.

Bus catches fire in north China, 14 dead, over 30 injured

BEIJING (AP)—A fire on a bus in northern China on Tuesday killed 14 people and injured more than 30, a fire spokeswoman said. The incident happened in Yinchuan, the capital of Ningxia region, at about 7 a.m., and the cause of the fire is still being investigated, said a press officer at the Ningxia fire department, who gave only her surname, Wang. She said firefighters put out the fire in 10 minutes, and that 14 people died and 32 were injured. There have been several serious bus fires in recent years in China, some blamed on people who were mentally unstable or were seeking revenge against society.

World

Allies follow Saudis in cutting ties with Iran amid tensions

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP)—Allies of Saudi Arabia followed the kingdom's lead Monday and scaled back diplomatic ties to Iran after the ransacking of Saudi diplomatic missions in the Islamic Republic, violence sparked by the Saudi execution of a prominent Shiite cleric.

Sudan and the tiny island kingdom of Bahrain said they would sever ties with Iran, as Saudi Arabia did late Sunday. Within hours, the United Arab Emirates announced it would downgrade ties to Tehran to the level of the charge d'affaires, while other nations issued statements criticizing Iran.

The concerted campaign by Sunni-ruled Saudi Arabia highlights the aggressive stance King Salman and his son, Deputy Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, have adopted in confronting Iran, a longtime regional rival.

"What we have seen during the last 24 hours is unprecedented... It shows you Saudi Arabia has had enough of Iran and wants to send a message," said Abdulkhaleq Abdullah, a political science professor at Emirates University. "This is the Saudis saying: 'There is no limit to how far we will go.'"

The standoff began Saturday, when Saudi Arabia executed Shiite cleric Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr and 46 others convicted of terror charges—the largest mass execution carried out by the kingdom since 1980.

Al-Nimr was a central figure in the Arab Spring-inspired protests by Saudi Arabia's Shiite minority, who long denied advocating violence. News of his execution has sparked Shiite protests from Bahrain to Pakistan.

In Iran, protesters attacked the Saudi Embassy in Tehran and its consulate in Mashhad. By late Sunday, Saudi Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir announced the kingdom would sever its relations with Iran over the assaults, giving Iranian diplomatic personnel 48 hours to leave his country.

AP
An Iranian woman holds up a poster showing Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr, a prominent opposition Saudi Shiite cleric who was executed last week by Saudi Arabia, in Tehran, Iran, Monday, Jan. 4, 2016.

On Monday, Saudi Arabia's civil aviation authority suspended all flights to and from Iran, saying the move was based on the kingdom's cutting of diplomatic ties.

Iran expressed "regret" over the attacks on the diplomatic missions in a letter to the United Nations on Monday and vowed to arrest those responsible. In the letter, obtained by The Associated Press, Iran's U.N. envoy Gholamali Khoshroo says more than 40 protesters have been arrested and that authorities are searching for other suspects.

In response to a Saudi letter, the U.N. Security Council late Monday condemned the attacks by Iranian protesters on the Saudi Embassy in Tehran and its consulate in Masshad "in the strongest terms" and called on Iranian authorities to protect diplomats and their property. The council statement, agreed to after hours of negotiations, made no mention of the Saudi executions or the rupture in Saudi-Iranian relations.

Saudi Arabia and Iran have long vied for influence in the Middle East, with their rivalry deepening following the toppling of Saddam Hussein in Iraq, which allowed Iran to assert dominance there, and the chaos of the Arab Spring, which gave rise to proxy wars in Syria and Yemen.

Fronting an armed deity, Charlie Hebdo declares itself alive

PARIS (AP)—In a special edition laced with blasphemy, obscenity and profanity, Charlie Hebdo's surviving artists and writers declared that the satirical newspaper is alive, but "the murderer is still at large."

The 32-page copy marking the anniversary of the Jan. 7 attack on the paper's staff accuses Islamic fundamentalists, organized religion, an irresolute government and intelligence failures for the 2015 violence in France by Muslim extremists that started with that day.

Seventeen people died at Charlie Hebdo and at a kosher supermarket two days later. They were among the first victims of a string of attacks by Islamic fundamentalists in France last year that ultimately left at least 147 people dead and hundreds of others injured.

Almost all of those believed directly responsible for the Jan. 7-9 attacks and the Nov. 13 carnage in Paris that killed 130 people are dead as well. But Charlie Hebdo's special edition this week, with a front-page caricature of a bloody God wielding an assault rifle, darkly predicts that more violence is to come.

Laurent Sourisseau, the newspaper's director who goes by the name Riss, drew the cover and wrote an editorial describing the horror he survived—and that took the lives of friends and colleagues. He described the newsroom's silence moments after the two gunmen opened fire, saying that was how he knew his colleagues were dead.

Riss wrote that Islamic fanatics and other religious zealots wanted Charlie Hebdo's secular journalists to pay the ultimate price "for daring to laugh at religion." He insisted that the newspaper would remain alive because "never have we wanted so much to break the faces of those who dreamed of our deaths."

The editorial "is violent and very insulting toward religion," Abdallah Zekri, president of the Observatory against Islamophobia, told BFM television on Monday.

In a separate piece, chief editor Gerard Biard marveled that, although the Charlie Hebdo killings launched a global debate on the role of religion and free speech, no one even bothered to explain to the world why the attackers went after the kosher supermarket.

WORLD BRIEFS

Kenya university reopens after extremists killed 148 people

NAIROBI, Kenya (AP)—A university where Islamic extremists killed 148 people nine months ago reopened on Monday, an event welcomed by many Kenyans as a victory against the jihadis. "Just by opening the university we have won the war against al-Shabab," said Khadija Mohamed, who was a counselor at the school when it was attacked last April, and who was among the returning staff and faculty. About 60 students are expected when some classes resume next week and the bulk of them, some 600, in September. Even though there was high security, returning to the college in Garissa, a town in eastern Kenya, was difficult for Mohamed who remembers the carnage and the victims. "Coming back to this college gives me a flashback of the killings," she told The Associated Press. "As their counselor, the students were very close to me. They were like my children. I lost many of my children."

Critter count: London Zoo begins annual animal census

LONDON (AP)—Animals stood up to be counted—or in some cases swam, crawled or flew—as London Zoo began its annual census. Zookeepers with cameras, calculators and clipboards counted critters Monday, the start of a weeklong campaign to record every resident mammal, bird, fish, invertebrate, reptile and amphibian. The zoo is home to 17,500 animals of more than 750 species, from silverback gorillas to tiny leaf-cutter ants. New arrivals in the past year include a baby Western lowland gorilla and a litter of African hunting dog pups. Ants and other extremely tiny creatures are counted in colonies, but all others are recorded individually. The annual stock-taking is required under the license terms of British zoos. The data is used for zoo management and international breeding programs for endangered animals.

53-year-old Swiss billionaire is pregnant with twins

PARIS (AP)—Louis Dreyfus Commodities has said that its 53-year-old Swiss billionaire chair is pregnant with twin girls. The conglomerate said in a statement Monday that Margarita Louis-Dreyfus is due in early April and will only take a "brief break" from working before returning full-time later that month. Russian-born Louis-Dreyfus became one of the richest women in the world in the years after she married famous French businessman Robert Louis-Dreyfus in 1992. She subsequently took over his company and the Olympique de Marseille football team on his death from leukemia in 2009. Louis-Dreyfus' current partner is 52-year-old businessman Philipp Hildebrand.

Unusual shooting attack sets off panic in Israeli heartland

TEL AVIV, Israel (AP)—For all its years of strife, Israel has rarely seen anything quite like this: an armed, wanted Arab killer on the loose, spreading fear across the land.

Even the most stoic are keeping their children home from school following the deadly daytime shooting at a popular bar on a busy Tel Aviv street that has become among the most unsettling attacks in a three-month wave of violence.

Israelis are used to quickly resuming their daily routines following attacks because assailants are typically captured or killed. But the frantic search for this gunman, whose attack on Friday afternoon was caught on security cameras, has sent jitters across this seaside city.

The unusual escape of the accused gunman, Nashat Milhem, an Arab from northern Israel who is considered to be armed and dangerous, is one of many elements of a case that has left Israelis on edge.

"Everything about this is characterized by uncertainty," said Yossi Melman, a prominent security analyst, adding that the level of planning and sophistication were closer in style to those of Islamic State attackers in Brussels, Paris and California.

"I'm not familiar with an event like this, with an unclear nature that has lasted this long," he said.

The shooting on Tel Aviv's busy Dizengoff Street, which killed two Israeli men and wounded six other people, was recorded on security cameras at a health food store next door.

In the footage, a man with short dark hair, glasses and a black bag over his shoulder is seen scooping up nuts from the shop's bulk food section, putting them in a plastic bag, then emptying them back. He then walks to the store entrance, places his backpack on a shopping cart and takes a gun out of it before stepping outside and opening fire into the bar. He then runs away.

Police say that after tossing his cellphone, Milhem hailed a cab that took him to northern Tel Aviv, where he killed the driver and escaped in the taxi before abandoning it and going off the grid.

Authorities got their first lead when Milhem's father, Mohammed, recognized his son from the closed circuit footage aired on TV. Milhem apparently obtained the licensed semi-automatic weapon he used by stealing it from his father, a security guard. The father condemned the killing and called on his son to turn himself in. Residents of their Arab town, Arara, also quickly denounced the attack.

Focus

Pentagon: Hundreds of military kids sexually abused annually

WASHINGTON (AP)—Cpl. Aaron C. Masa befriended a fellow Marine during field training in North Carolina. But behind his buddy's back, Masa sexually abused his 3-year-old stepdaughter and took sexually explicit photos of her and the Marine's baby girl.

A military judge convicted Masa last year of sexual abuse of a child and production of child pornography, according to court records and other documents detailing the case. Under the terms of a pretrial agreement, Masa pleaded guilty and received 30 years in prison.

The sexual assault of military dependents occurs hundreds of times each year, according to data the Defense Department provided exclusively to The Associated Press. There were at least 1,584 substantiated cases between fiscal years 2010 and 2014, according to the data, which is the most current available. The abuse is committed most often by male enlisted troops, followed by family members.

The figures offer greater insight into the sexual abuse of children committed by service members, a problem of uncertain scale due to a lack of transparency into the military's legal proceedings. With more than 1 million military dependents, the number of cases appears statistically small. But for a profession that prides itself on honor and discipline, any episodes of abuse cast a pall.

Those numbers fall well-short of offering a full picture.

The ages of the offenders and victims, the locations of the incidents and the branch of service that received the report of sexual abuse were omitted. The Defense Department said in a statement that "information that could unintentionally uniquely identify victims was withheld from release to eliminate possible 're-victimization' of the innocent."

It's also unclear how many of the incidents resulted in legal action. The cases represent substantiated occurrences of child sexual abuse reported to the Defense Department's Family Advocacy Program, which does not track judicial proceedings, the department said.

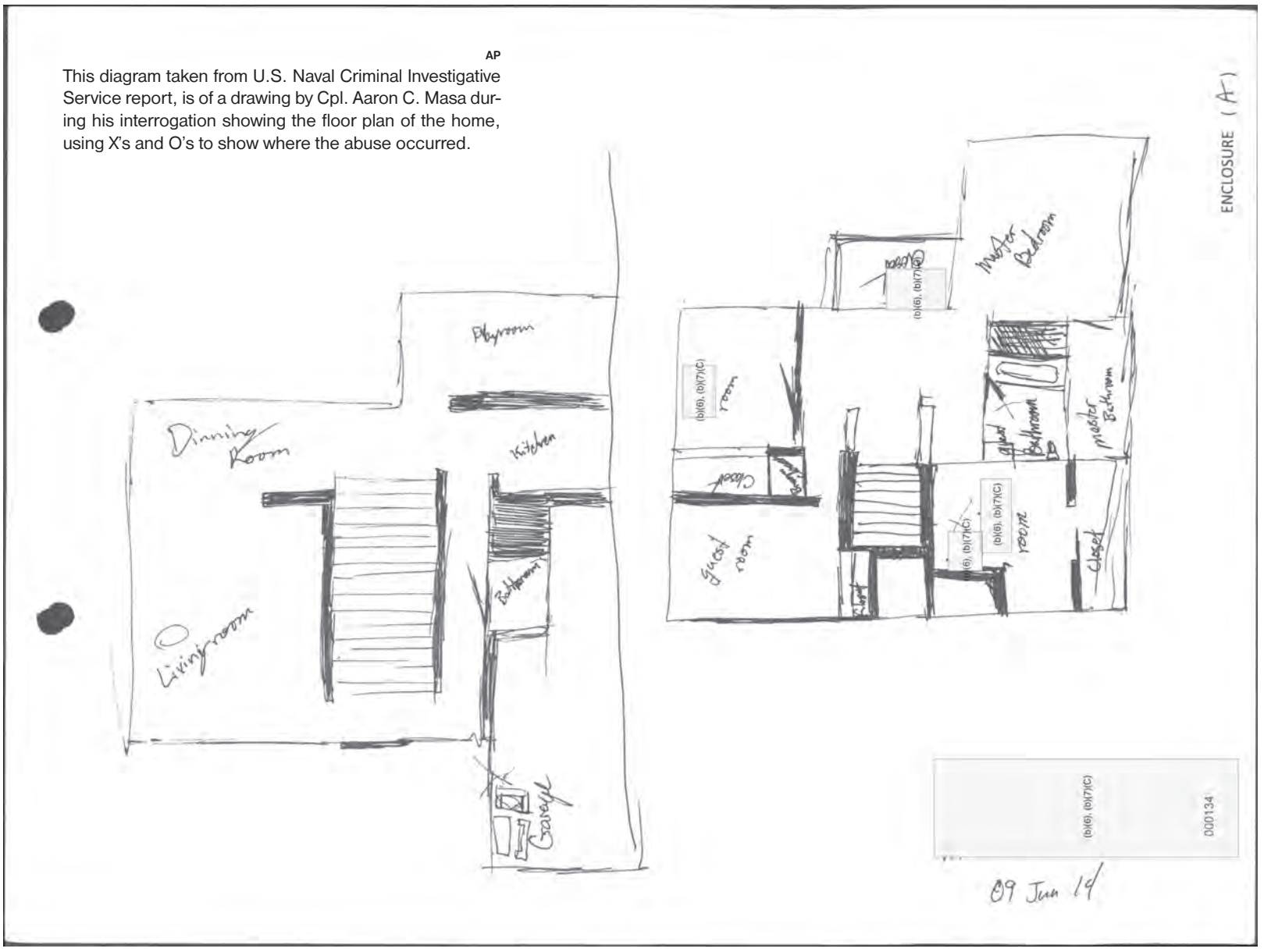
An AP investigation published in November found more inmates are in military prisons for child sex crimes than for any other offense. But the military's opaque justice system keeps the public from knowing the full extent of their crimes or how much time they spend behind bars.

Responding to AP's findings, three Democratic senators urged Defense Secretary Ash Carter to lift what they called the military justice system's "cloak of secrecy" and make records from sex-crimes trials readily accessible.

The senators also raised another concern. Child sex-assault cases are not included in the Defense Department's annual report to Congress on sexual assaults, which focuses primarily on adult-on-adult incidents, they said. The senators—Barbara Boxer of California, Kirsten Gillibrand of New York and Mazie Hirono of Hawaii—told Carter in a Dec. 8 letter they are concerned the department may be underestimating how many sexual assaults are occurring in the military.

AP

This diagram taken from U.S. Naval Criminal Investigative Service report, is of a drawing by Cpl. Aaron C. Masa during his interrogation showing the floor plan of the home, using X's and O's to show where the abuse occurred.



Of the 1,584 substantiated cases, enlisted service members sexually abused children in 840 of them. Family members of the victims accounted for the second largest category with 332 cases.

Most of the enlisted offenders were males whose ranks ranged between E-4 and E-6. In the Marine Corps and Army, for example, those troops are corporals, sergeants and staff sergeants. Officers were involved in 49 of the cases. The victims were overwhelmingly female.

Kathy Robertson, manager of the Family Advocacy Program, said in an emailed response to questions that the incident rates reflect the U.S. military's demographics. Most of the cases involve the E-4 and E-6 ranks because they are the largest number of active-duty personnel and the largest number of parents in the military, she said.

Duplications in the data indicate that as many as 160 additional cases of sexual abuse could have occurred during the 2010 to 2014 period, involving a child who was victimized multiple times or a repeat abuser. The figures also account just for cases involving military dependents, which are the only child victims the department tracks.

The data on sex crimes committed by civilians is not comparable to the figures maintained by the Pentagon due to differences in demographics and the way incidents are reported.

Making a direct comparison to national statistics "would be misleading," Robertson said. However, a 2013 study of child maltreatment by the U.S. Health and Human Services Department suggests incidents of child sexual abuse are higher in the general population than among military families.

In Masa's case, military authorities first became aware of the alleged abuse in June 2014 after the 3-year-old told a neighbor that she did not like Masa because he touched her in certain places and "made it hurt," according to the Naval Criminal Investigative Service's investigation obtained by AP through the Freedom of Information Act.

NCIS blacked out all the names in the report, including Masa's. The AP identified him by the dates and events in the document that matched records from Masa's court-martial.

Masa, 25, admitted during questioning to at least five instances of sexually assaulting her, the NCIS report said. Investigators found nude photos of both girls on his cellphone and later discovered a pair of girl's underwear during a search of his mother's home in Ohio.

The report depicted Masa as a loner with a troubled past. People interviewed by the Navy investigators described him as "oddball" who was picked on in high school in Marietta, Ohio. He graduated near the bottom of his class with a cumulative 1.782 GPA, according to his official transcript.

Masa watched a lot of sexually explicit Japanese animation known as hentai, the NCIS report said, and he had an intense interest in "furry porn," a genre of pornography in which animal characters with human arms and legs engage in sex.

In 2008, Masa was arrested after threatening to bring a gun to school and shoot three other students, according to the NCIS report, which included details of the incident. Police didn't find a gun on him, but he had a knife. He pleaded guilty to a disorderly conduct charge.

He enlisted in the Marine Corps in June 2010, a month after graduating from high school. The arrest wasn't serious enough to bar Masa from enlisting. A Marine Corps spokesman said he was found qualified after a thorough screening process that involved physical, mental and moral evaluations.

Stationed at Camp Lejeune, a sprawling installation on the North Carolina coast, Masa started a friendship with the Marine sergeant and his family in 2013, according to the 286-page NCIS report. They fished together and chopped wood for the sergeant's fire pit. Masa loaned the sergeant money to help the family through a financially difficult period and spent more and more time at their home, the report said. He babysat the girls and volunteered to give the older daughter a bath, the documents said.

Amid the good will, suspicions surfaced. The girls' mother suspected as early as March 2014 that the 3-year-old daughter was being molested because she complained of pain "down there," according to portions of medical records from a hospital near Camp Lejeune that are included in the NCIS report. The girl was sleeping by the door and having nightmares, the mother said.

Yet at the hospital, the girl was in high spirits, smiling, laughing and jumping on the bed, according to the report. She was diagnosed as having a urinary tract infection and antibiotics were prescribed. "Mom advised to follow up with law enforcement if she has concern about possible molestation," the report said, quoting the medical records.

But an investigation wouldn't be launched until a few months later, after the girl talked to the neighbor. While being questioned by investigators, Masa drew a diagram of the floor plan of the sergeant's home, using X's and O's to show where the abuse occurred.

Masa is serving his sentence at the U.S. Disciplinary Barracks at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.

Good Housekeeping

With the right eye, treasures among the trash

By Nicole Brodeur
THE SEATTLE TIMES

SEATTLE—For Sarah Littlefield, there's decorating gold in that there junk.

Picking.

It's not the most glamorous way to describe your livelihood, the skill you have been developing for years, the thing you do when you walk into a room stuffed with belongings and know there's something special waiting to be found.

But that's what Sarah Littlefield does for Seattle restaurants, retail stores and people who have the money but not the time to search for a Certain Something for themselves or someone else.

All of them call on Seattle Junk Love to find what they didn't even know they were looking for, but what Littlefield is skilled at spotting: Pendleton blankets, leather cowboy hats and old signage. And, quite often, the perfect Christmas gift.

"I buy things knowing this person is going to want it," Littlefield said recently. "I have a roster of people that I shop for. If I'm lucky, the piece is sold by the time I get to my car."

These are especially busy days for Littlefield, whose Etsy shop and Instagram feed carry regular posts of what she's picked from the piles at estate sales and flea markets from Seattle to Mexico, as well as places like New York and her native North Dakota.

A Filson Mackinaw coat. A constellation of belt buckles. A battered Thonet chair oozing with restoration potential.

"It's that thing when you know you'll never see anything like it again," Littlefield said of her picking technique. "I know what people are on the lookout for."

Littlefield, 47, grew up in Fargo, N.D., the daughter of an educator mother and a university professor father who was "super curious" about architecture and history, and who could hold forth on obscure subjects like wheat production during the Civil War.

At Oklahoma State University, Littlefield's instinct was to become a history major, but instead she got into recreation administration and started hitting estate sales in her free time. It was her way to stay connected with things past and to learn in the process.

"Half the fun is the research, the backstory," Littlefield said of her finds. "The beauty is in a thing's utility, or history, or the fact that it's site-specific."

Littlefield moved to Seattle with a girlfriend in 2001 and worked for a remodeling firm until 2008, when the housing crisis cost her her job. She did staging for a realtor, which helped her polish her design skills. She saw where one vintage item could anchor, or enhance a room.

All the while, she kept at the estate sales, picking up things she found interesting.

Sarah Littlefield, professional picker, poses for a portrait with paint-by-numbers artwork she has collected over the years.
JOHN LOK/THE SEATTLE TIMES/TNS

When Jody Hall was starting Cupcake Royale in 2005, Littlefield helped find furniture, lighting and casework for the stores.

"I used the newspaper, Craigslist, drove around with a map," she said, shaking her head and cradling her iPhone like a bar of gold. "It was the dark ages, for sure."

What Hall didn't want, Littlefield sold to other restaurants and shops, who asked her to look for more. So did set designers on films and at the Microsoft Studios, as well as private people looking to put some pop, or history, in their homes.

Littlefield also took over a corner of the Georgetown shop called District, where Macklemore spotted and bought one of her hats.

Recently, she helped Filson with the design of its new store.

And she has picked up clients, who ask her to search for things such as barware and paintings of saints.

In addition to Cupcake Royale, Littlefield has helped with the design of the Salt & Straw ice cream shops in Portland, Linda Derschang's Bait Shop and the Urban Animal veterinary clinic on Capitol Hill. That last job led to her being asked to help design a veterinary clinic in Toronto. It is located in what was once the oldest continuous funeral home in Ontario.

There's a lot of that going on here; the old being gutted and repurposed. But that doesn't mean there's a wave of stuff to pick through in Seattle.

"It's rough," Littlefield said. "The competition is rough."

So rough that she will spend the night in her van outside an estate sale in order to get in first. There's always a line of shop owners and collectors looking for vintage clothing, tools, records and electronics.

"I go in and I look," she said. "It sounds stupid. There should be some science to it. But I can't explain it. More, the trick is to know where to go regionally, based on the age of the cities and the towns.

"You used to be able to go to an estate sale in Wallingford, but not anymore. Things have turned over."

Maybe you can find some good picking in the old warehouses in Georgetown or South Seattle. But for the most part, it's architectural salvage, "and that's another person's gig," she said.

The place to go junking are rural areas, smaller cities. The Midwest. ("My homeland," Littlefield cracked).

At the home she shares with her wife, Larisa, Littlefield stores her finds and keeps her own collections of chalk animals, photos of same-sex couples and paint-by-numbers of outdoor scenes.

Some things have been impossible to part with: the 1920s-era Calumet Baking Powder clock that once hung in the kitchen of her father's farm. The Trapper Nelson backpack (started by local Lloyd T. Nelson in 1924) on which the owner had sketched his journeys.

"I mean, shut up!" Littlefield said, pulling the photo up on her phone.

One recent find: A 3-foot-by-6-foot framed drawing of the old Fisher Flour Mill on Harbor Island. It includes a Norwegian ship docked out front, complete with wicker deck chairs; a man driving a delivery truck and another man walking in the front door.

Littlefield keeps it on the mantle. It will likely stay there.

"I'd sell it to the Fisher family," she said, "but that's about it."

In that sense, Littlefield is not so much a picker, as the one who finds the things that people didn't even know they wanted, or needed, or couldn't do without.

Sounds about right, she said.

"I know it when I see it."

Littlefield's collection of dogs made out of chalk.
JOHN LOK/THE SEATTLE TIMES/TNS

A painting of the old Fisher flour mill on Harbor Island in Seattle rests atop Sarah Littlefield's mantle. The picture shows a Norwegian ship docked out front, complete with wicker deck chairs, a man driving a delivery truck and another man walking in the front door.
JOHN LOK/THE SEATTLE TIMES/TNS

COMFORT FOOD

Four Cheese Macaroni

By HEALTHY EXCHANGES
KING FEATURES SYND., INC.

This is so "cheesy," you'll never believe you're eating healthy!

3 cups hot cooked elbow macaroni
1/4 cup Land O'Lakes Fat Free Half & Half
1/4 cup fat-free milk
3/4 cup shredded Kraft reduced-fat Cheddar cheese
3/4 cup shredded Kraft reduced-fat mozzarella cheese
3 (3/4-ounce) slices Kraft reduced-fat Swiss cheese, shredded
1/4 cup Kraft Reduced Fat Parmesan Style Grated Topping
1 teaspoon dried parsley flakes
1/8 teaspoon black pepper

1. In a large saucepan sprayed with butter-flavored cooking spray, combine macaroni, half & half and milk. Add Cheddar, mozzarella, Swiss and Parmesan cheese. Mix well to combine. Stir in parsley flakes and black pepper.

2. Cook over medium-low heat for 5 minutes or until cheeses melt, stirring often. Makes 6 (3/4 cup) servings.

TIP: Usually 2 cups uncooked elbow macaroni cooks to about 3 cups.

** Each serving equals: 245 calories, 9g fat, 16g protein, 25g carb., 346mg sodium, 1gm fiber; Diabetic Exchanges: 2 Meat, 1 1/2 Starch.*

Life & Style

'Star Wars' flies toward 'Avatar' record

AP
This photo provided by Disney/Lucasfilm shows a scene from the new film, "Star Wars: The Force Awakens," directed by J.J. Abrams.

LOS ANGELES (AP)—"Star Wars: The Force Awakens" is even closer to usurping "Avatar's" reign as the top domestic box office earner of all time.

Disney's record-busting film brought in $90.2 million over the New Year's weekend, bringing its domestic total to $742.2 million. "Avatar" earned $760.5 million over its theatrical lifetime—a record "Star Wars" is expected to pass this week.

But "Star Wars" wasn't the only film that enjoyed a strong weekend. The Will Ferrell and Mark Wahlberg comedy "Daddy's Home" took second place with $29.2 million in its second weekend in release, while Quentin Tarantino's bloody epic "The Hateful Eight" came in third in its first weekend in wide release with $15.7 million.

Rounding out the top five were the Tina Fey and Amy Poehler comedy "Sisters" and the animated "Alvin and the Chipmunks: The Road Chip" with $12.8 million and $12.1 million, respectively.

The top 20 movies at U.S. and Canadian theaters Friday through Sunday, followed by distribution studio, gross, number of theater locations, average receipts per location, total gross and number of weeks in release, as compiled Monday by Rentrak:

1. **"Star Wars: The Force Awakens,"** Disney, $90,241,673, 4,134 locations, $21,829 average, $742,208,942, 3 weeks.
2. **"Daddy's Home,"** Paramount, $29,205,583, 3,342 locations, $8,739 average, $93,889,861, 2 weeks.
3. **"The Hateful Eight,"** The Weinstein Company, $15,706,645, 2,474 locations, $6,349 average, $29,045,855, 2 weeks.
4. **"Sisters,"** Universal, $12,760,730, 2,978 locations, $4,285 average, $61,884,110, 3 weeks.
5. **"Alvin and the Chipmunks: The Road Chip,"** 20th Century Fox, $12,071,523, 3,474 locations, $3,475 average, $67,646,950, 3 weeks.
6. **"Joy,"** 20th Century Fox, $10,210,971, 2,924 locations, $3,492 average, $38,521,065, 2 weeks.
7. **"The Big Short,"** Paramount, $9,060,303, 1,588 locations, $5,705 average, $33,055,481, 4 weeks.
8. **"Concussion,"** Sony, $7,846,281, 2,841 locations, $2,762 average, $25,266,650, 2 weeks.
9. **"Point Break,"** Warner Bros., $6,817,641, 2,910 locations, $2,343 average, $22,402,176, 2 weeks.
10. **"The Hunger Games: Mockingjay Part 2,"** Lionsgate, $4,616,274, 1,485 locations, $3,109 average, $274,185,395, 7 weeks.
11. **"The Good Dinosaur,"** Disney, $4,050,462, 1,735 locations, $2,335 average, $114,766,932, 6 weeks.
12. **"Creed,"** Warner Bros., $3,737,106, 1,375 locations, $2,718 average, $103,122,271, 6 weeks.
13. **"Danish Girl, The,"** Focus Features, $1,543,909, 449 locations, $3,439 average, $6,050,349, 6 weeks.
14. **"Brooklyn,"** Fox Searchlight, $1,248,858, 284 locations, $4,397 average, $20,812,853, 9 weeks.
15. **"Spotlight,"** Open Road, $1,185,093, 385 locations, $3,078 average, $27,108,972, 9 weeks.
16. **"Carol,"** The Weinstein Company, $1,181,341, 189 locations, $6,250 average, $4,982,475, 7 weeks.
17. **"Krampus,"** Universal, $812,020, 663 locations, $1,225 average, $42,277,730, 5 weeks.
18. **"Bajirao Mastani,"** Eros Entertainment, $778,957, 302 locations, $2,579 average, $5,848,971, 3 weeks.
19. **"Spectre,"** Sony, $730,706, 331 locations, $2,208 average, $197,833,291, 9 weeks.
20. **"In The Heart Of The Sea,"** Warner Bros., $686,785, 533 locations, $1,289 average, $23,750,170, 4 weeks.

Activision acquires e-sports organizer Major League Gaming

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Activision is adding a veteran e-sports organizer to its arsenal.

"Call of Duty" publisher Activision Blizzard Inc. announced plans Monday to buy Major League Gaming in a move to push deeper into e-sports. The deal to purchase the 12-year-old competitive gaming organizer is reportedly worth $46 million.

"Our acquisition of Major League Gaming's business furthers our plans to create the ESPN of e-sports," said Activision CEO Bobby Kotick in a statement.

Under the deal, MLG will continue to produce competitions featuring games created by Activision and other publishers. The e-sports organizer will also continue to operate the online broadcast network MLG.tv and be led by MLG co-founder and CEO Sundance DiGiovanni.

AP
This June 13, 2013 file photo shows the Activision Blizzard Booth during the Electronic Entertainment Expo in Los Angeles.

The announcement comes after months of several high-profile hires and acquisitions by Activision.

Activision hired MLG co-founder Mike Sepso and former ESPN and NFL Network executive Steve Bornstein last year.

In October, Activision unveiled plans to shift an annual "Call of Duty " tournament to a year-round international league, as well as increase the prize pool from $1 to $3 million

The Santa Monica, Calif.-based company, which also publishers the "Skylanders" and "Guitar Hero" franchises, said in November it was acquiring "Candy Crush Saga" publisher King Entertainment for $5.9 billion and planning to create its own film and TV series based on Activision Blizzard franchises.

Ellen DeGeneres to accept People's Choice humanitarian award

AP
In this March 21, 2015, file photo, Ellen DeGeneres arrives at the 26th Annual GLAAD Media Awards held at the Beverly Hilton Hotel, in Beverly Hills, Calif.

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Ellen DeGeneres is receiving a humanitarian award, and St. Jude Children's Research Hospital is reaping the benefits.

Producers of the People's Choice Awards announced Monday that DeGeneres will be recognized as the Favorite Humanitarian at Wednesday's ceremony. The honor comes with a $200,000 donation from Walgreens, which DeGeneres is directing toward the hospital.

She joked that the award "sums me up perfectly as I am both a human and an itarian."

DeGeneres is also nominated for Favorite Talk Show Host at the fan-voted People's Choice Awards, which will be presented at the Microsoft Theater in Los Angeles and broadcast on CBS.

Body of missing country singer recovered at Oklahoma lake

PONCA CITY, Okla. (AP)—The body of a country singer was recovered Monday at an Oklahoma lake, one week after he disappeared while going duck hunting with a companion who had sent an ominous tweet about threatening weather.

The Oklahoma Highway Patrol said Craig M. Strickland, 29, of Springdale, Arkansas, had died at Kaw Lake, near the Kansas-Oklahoma state line. The body of his hunting partner, Chase Morland, 22, of Van Buren, Arkansas, was recovered Dec. 28.

Strickland was the lead singer of Arkansas-based country-rock band Backroad Anthem, which said Monday that it appeared Strickland was able to drag himself out of the water before dying.

"Today we lost our brother, our best friend, our bandmate," the band said in a statement released by its publicist, Jensen Sussman of Nashville, Tennessee, to The Associated Press. "Thankful to know he fought his way from the water to a hill and was lying in the shape of a cross on his back looking up to his Heavenly Father ..."

"Today he is smiling down on us and we know he will always be with us. He will always be here to help guide us along the way. We love you Craig Strickland and we will forever miss you!" the statement said.

A tweet from Morland ahead of the hunt suggested they knew the danger: "In case we don't come back, @BackroadCRAIG and I are going right through (the storm) to kill ducks in Oklahoma. #IntoTheStorm."

A strong weather system whipped Oklahoma with high winds during the Christmas weekend, with blizzard conditions in the west and strong thunderstorms and heavy rains to the east. The pair's boat was found Dec. 27, the same day the two disappeared. Before Strickland's body was recovered, the Oklahoma Department of Emergency Management had said six people had died in the severe weather around Christmas.

Kay County Sheriff Everette VanHoesen said last week that inexperienced boaters can be surprised by worsening conditions on the 38-mile-long lake.

Swan song for 'American Idol' after 15 game-changing years

LOS ANGELES (AP)—It started on June 11, 2002, with a couple of unfamiliar hosts posing in an empty theater and making an overblown declaration to TV viewers.

"Live on this stage, an unknown talent will be launched into superstardom," said Brian Dunkleman.

"You at home decide who will become the next American idol," intoned Ryan Seacrest.

The reasonable reaction: uh-huh, sure. But it turned out the two were underselling Fox's "American Idol."

The singing contest, which begins its 15th and final season Wednesday, was a blockbuster that invigorated its network. It made stars of Kelly Clarkson, Carrie Underwood, Jennifer Hudson and others, and resurrected the TV talent show as a boom industry that includes NBC's "The Voice" and ABC's "Dancing with the Stars."

AP

In this Feb. 11, 2007 file photo, Carrie Underwood poses with the awards for best new artist and for best female country vocal performance for "Jesus, Take the Wheel" at the 49th Annual Grammy Awards in Los Angeles. Underwood rose to fame as the winner of the fourth season of "American Idol," in 2005.

"It not only was a huge success for Fox but impacted everyone else," said Bill Carroll, media analyst with Katz Television Group. "It once again underscored the fact that broadcast television is communal and an event."

"American Idol," from megaproducer Simon Fuller and based on his British hit "Pop Idol," did even more. It breathed life into the music industry as it and network TV both grappled with technology-driven changes in consumer habits.

The show's end is the result of dwindling ratings, the inevitable fate of even durable performers. "Idol," which averaged more than 30 million weekly viewers at its 2006 peak and ranked No. 1 for nine consecutive years, averaged about 11 million last season (still enough by today's standards to land it in the top 20, but with fewer advertiser-favored younger viewers).

Whatever its change in fortunes, the series will get a send-off worthy of a television landmark, said executive producer Trish Kinane.

As she sees it, that means paying tribute to its past while focusing on the battle among this year's contestants to become the last "Idol" winner.

"It's that tricky thing of, 'Hey, it's the 15th season, let's do nostalgia, let's look back at the show's really rich history,'" Kinane said. "But on the other hand, you've got to find an amazing American Idol. So we're trying to combine both of those things."

To accomplish that "organically," she said, past winners and familiar runners-up will be sprinkled throughout the season, starting with the open auditions in which Ruben Studdard, Clay Aiken, Taylor Hicks and others were on hand to share tips with the hopefuls.

Plans also call for duets pairing contestants with their now-famous predecessors, who "all want to be involved, somehow," Kinane said.

A famous non-Idol, Kanye West, made a surprise appearance at the judges' auditions in San Francisco in September, with wife Kim Kardashian West along as his cheerleader. His "tryout" is included in Wednesday's episode.

The season debut is a four-hour, two-night affair, airing from 8-10 p.m. EST Wednesday and Thursday and opening on a retrospective note with the Seacrest-Dunkleman '02 clip.

One contestant featured in the premiere demonstrates the show's impressive hold on its fans. Michelle Marie Lecza of Daytona Beach, Florida, recalls watching it as a 4-year-old and can recite all of the winners, in order.

"'American Idol' is what I based my life off of. I am going to walk into the audition room and go get my dream," the braces-wearing 15-year-old says.

Such fervor made "American Idol" a well-timed hit. With social media gaining steam, viewers wanted to get in on the real-time conversation about "Idol"—good news for networks selling commercial airtime and the sponsors who wanted their ads to be seen, not skipped as the show was replayed on a DVR.

The live "Idol" episodes increased that appetite and launched the networks' embrace of a variety of other live broadcasts that included NBC's musicals "The Sound of Music" and "The Wiz."

It was a salve as well for the music business: In 2009, Steve Knopper, author of "Appetite for Self-Destruction: The Spectacular Crash of the Record Industry in the Digital Age," called "American Idol" and its robust digital sales one of the few bright spots for the industry as consumers grew increasingly resistant to shelling out for albums.

The series became such an impressive promotional platform that established artists including Steven Tyler, Mariah Carey and Prince dropped in as panelists, mentors and performers

So did Harry Connick Jr., Jennifer Lopez and Keith Urban, returning for their third year together as judges to usher "Idol" to its conclusion. They're joined by the savvy, unflappable Seacrest, the show's on-camera linchpin who outlasted fellow original cast members Simon Cowell, Paula Abdul and Randy Jackson (and Dunkleman, who was one-and-done).

Low-rated 'Meredith Vieira Show' ending after 2 seasons

LOS ANGELES (AP)—"The Meredith Vieira Show" is ending after two seasons.

In a statement Monday, Vieira said she was sorry to see her daytime talk show wrap and thanked her viewers.

Vieira's syndicated program failed to get ratings traction in the competitive daytime arena ruled by shows including "Dr. Phil," "The Ellen DeGeneres Show" and "Live With Kelly and Michael."

"The Meredith Vieira Show," distributed by NBC Universal Domestic Television Group, will air through May.

Vieira won't be idle after that: She will head to Rio de Janeiro to help cover the Summer Olympics, airing on NBC in August.

AP

In this July 13, 2014 file photo Meredith Vieira attends the NBC 2014 Summer TCA in Beverly Hills, Calif.

Woman still angry at family for ignoring childhood trauma

DEAR ABBY: At the age of 15 I was raped by my first boyfriend. It's how I lost my virginity. Shortly afterward, I became severely depressed and bulimic. I blocked my trauma until 11 years later, when I had a flashback. I sought out a therapist and have been seeing him for the past six months.

I feel so much resentment and anger toward my family for not having helped me through this difficult time. They didn't know about the rape, but they knew about my eating disorder, and I'm sure they must have noticed my depressed mood. They simply looked the other way, and I was offered no help whatsoever.

I am angry with my mother especially, because she has always been detached and critical of me. I'm afraid to tell her what happened for fear of being blamed. She has now been diagnosed with cancer, and I'm afraid she'll die before I get the courage to tell her. What can I do?

ANGRY IN CALIFORNIA

DEAR ANGRY: It might be helpful to look more carefully at the reasons why you are angry with your family. It's unfair to blame them for not recognizing something they were never told. It is not uncommon for teenagers to withdraw to some extent in order to establish their own identities, apart from their parents. Your parents may have thought that was what you were doing.

As to your eating disorder, I remember a time in the not-too-distant past when little was known about anorexia and bulimia. It wasn't until after the death of recording artist Karen Carpenter that media attention focused on how serious and life-threatening an eating disorder could be.

This is not to excuse your mother for her inability to be the parent you needed while growing up. It's important that you work with your therapist on how to talk to her about all of your feelings. It shouldn't be done in an accusatory manner, and you should have no fear of being blamed for your rape. It wasn't your fault that you were assaulted, and no one should be able to make you feel guilty for having been a victim—not even your mother—who, I am sure, will be shocked by your revelation.

DEAR ABBY: I have known "Julia" for a long time. She was my best friend in high school and my maid of honor when I got married. She and her husband have an open relationship and invite other women into their bedroom. Several years ago, when my husband and I were struggling, they asked me if I wanted to join them. I declined in favor of working on my marriage. After that, Julia and I drifted apart and we spoke only rarely.

Our children go to the same school now, so we have reconnected and I realize how much I have missed having her as a close friend. Recently, however, Julia's husband, "Jerry," has started making suggestive remarks when he's the one picking their daughter up from school. It makes me really uncomfortable. When I told my husband about it, he wasn't happy.

How do I ask this man to stop without losing Julia's friendship again? I see them every day now, and I'd hate for there to be bitterness between us.

NOT INTERESTED THAT WAY

DEAR NOT INTERESTED: Tell Jerry that his comments are making you uncomfortable and to cut it out. Point out that while you and your husband are not judgmental about their lifestyle, you are not interested in being more than good platonic friends. Then repeat it to Julia, so she hears it straight from you. If, after that, your refusal to participate in their bedroom antics causes "bitterness," then so be it.

For an excellent guide to becoming a better conversationalist and a more sociable person, order "How to Be Popular." Send your name and mailing address, plus check or money order for $7 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby, Popularity Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Shipping and handling are included in the price.)

DEAR ABBY

By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

Pastimes

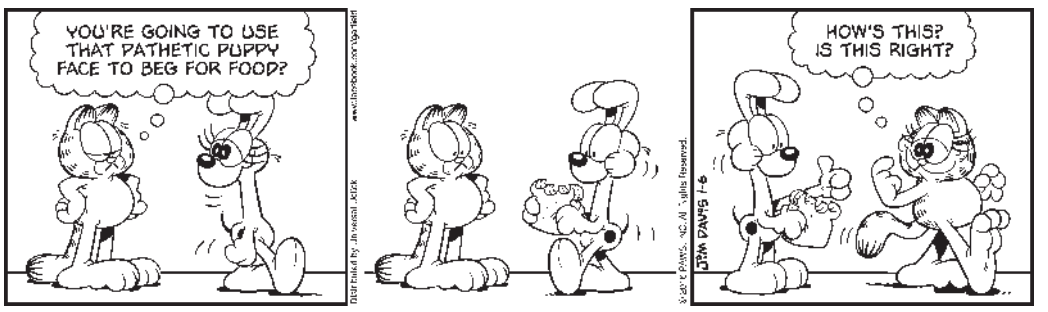
Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson

HOBBES, WHAT DO YOU THINK HAPPENS TO US WHEN WE DIE?
I THINK WE PLAY SAXOPHONE FOR AN ALL-GIRL CABARET IN NEW ORLEANS.
SO YOU BELIEVE IN HEAVEN?
CALL IT WHAT YOU LIKE.

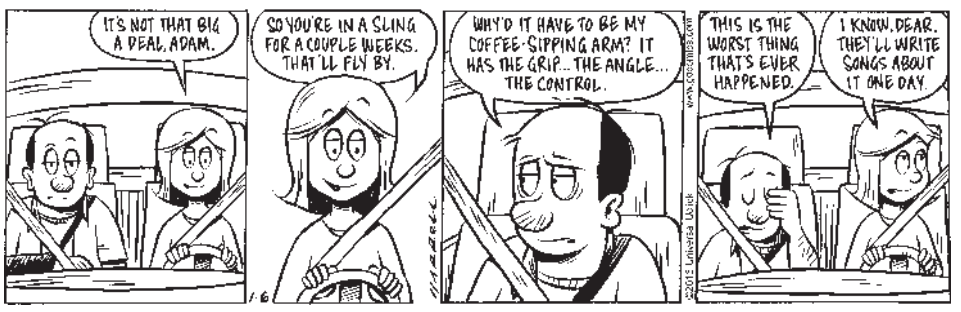
Garfield®

By Jim Davis



Adam@home

By Bryan Basset


IT'S NOT THAT BIG A DEAL, ADAM.
SO YOU'RE IN A SLING FOR A COUPLE WEEKS. THAT'LL FLY BY.
WHY'D IT HAVE TO BE MY COFFEE-SIPPING ARM? IT HAS THE GRIP... THE ANGLE... THE CONTROL.
THIS IS THE WORST THING THAT'S EVER HAPPENED.
I KNOW, DEAR. THEY'LL WRITE SONGS ABOUT IT ONE DAY.

The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy

CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 Luau chow
4 Berlin is its cap. (Abbr.)
7 Make a left or right
8 Shore birds
10 Egypt's neighbor
11 Singer's bane
13 Anglophile's breakfast treat
16 Path
17 Ruth's mother-in-law
18 Disney deer
19 Faberge treasures
20 "Hey you!"
21 Decrease?
23 Malice
25 Film spool
26 At the apex of
27 Adj. modifier
28 Quarrel
30 Jungle swinger
33 Francophile's breakfast treat
36 Maryland songbird
37 Memory gap
38 Bank donation
39 "Horton Hears —!"
40 Tours season
41 Genetics lab study

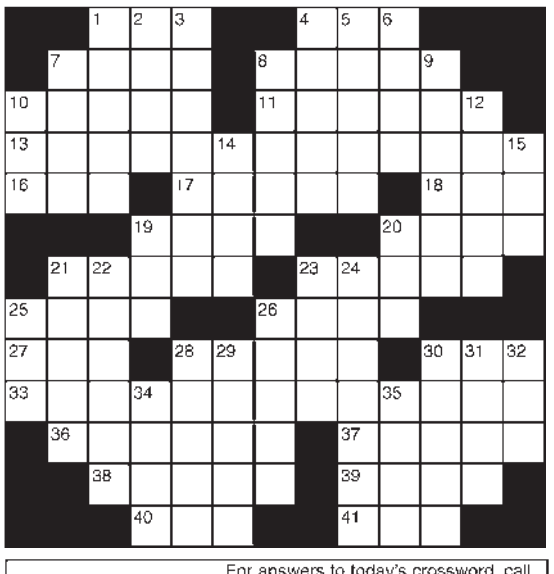
DOWN

1 Roly-poly
2 Spoken
3 Baseball divisions
4 Big name in fairy tales
5 Bored feeling
6 Coral expanse
7 Bumble Bee product
8 Cultural spirit
9 Least risky
10 Make a quilt
12 Hose down
14 Droops
15 Storied Turner
19 Sushi fish
20 Dot on a domino
21 California's San — Bay
22 Studio echo
23 Twinkler
24 In vogue
25 British flying gp.
26 Rainbow-shaped
28 Move (over)
29 Ravel's "Daphnis et —"
30 Athens "A"
31 Cancún cash
32 Before, in verse
34 "Blue" river
35 Sprinkler target

Solution time: 23 mins.

F	L	R	A	■	P	T	A	■	P	R	A	M
M	E	L	S	■	H	A	■	■	R	A	N	■
M	E	A	T	■	A	R	M	Y	A	N	T	S
A	R	M	R	E	S	T	■	A	I	D	E	S
■	■	■	A	Y	E	■	U	P	S	■	■	■
■	E	V	Y	E	■	A	R	S	E	N	I	C
E	R	A	■	■	W	A	N	■	■	A	N	O
A	R	■	E	M	I	S	■	A	M	E	N	D
■	■	■	C	A	T	■	C	R	O	■	■	■
Y	E	L	L	S	■	A	R	I	Z	O	N	A
A	R	E	A	C	O	D	E	■	A	L	E	X
M	I	D	I	■	V	E	■	■	H	E	A	L
S	E	A	R	■	A	S	E	■	I	O	H	E

Yesterday's answer 1-6



STUMPED? For answers to today's crossword, call **1-900-226-5955!** 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Julie Chen, 46; Gabrielle Reece, 46; John Singleton, 48; Rowan Atkinson, 61.

Happy Birthday: Your success in achieving your goals will be determined by your ability to separate your emotions from the facts and the choices you have to make. Don't let anyone manipulate you into a situation that will slow you down or hold you back. Offer suggestions, but direct your time and money toward your needs. Your numbers are 7, 18, 21, 25, 29, 37, 44.

ARIES (*March 21-April 19*): Stay focused on what you want. You can talk your way in to a position that will bring you the rewards and returns you are looking for. Love, commitment and future plans should be made. Romance and celebration are encouraged. ✪✪✪✪✪

TAURUS (*April 20-May 20*): You'll gain experience and knowledge if you attend a trade show, conference or discussion with colleagues. Delays or problems while traveling or dealing with institutions can be expected. Protect your assets against theft or loss. ✪✪✪

GEMINI (*May 21-June 20*): You can outsmart, outmaneuver and outshine anyone you come up against, but in doing so, make sure that the promises you make are doable. A personal partnership will undergo changes that could improve your standard of living. ✪✪✪

CANCER (*June 21-July 22*): Rely on your intuition. Your ability to expand your interests, knowledge and friendships will lead to events and activities that will boost your morale and result in positive changes. Don't underestimate the extent of a job. Do your homework before making an offer. ✪✪✪

LEO (*July 23-Aug. 22*): Take part in events that involve people who work in your industry or share your interests. You will make excellent connections that will bring about unusual and sudden changes to the way you live. Love is highlighted. ✪✪✪✪✪

VIRGO (*Aug. 23-Sept. 22*): You'll face problems with family members. Try to be understanding, but demand the whole truth before you decide whether to get involved. A change in your financial situation is apparent. Don't take on unnecessary debt. ✪✪

LIBRA (*Sept. 23-Oct. 22*): You need a break. Whether it's a day at the spa or a short trip with someone you love, turn your plans into a reality. Refuse to let domestic responsibilities stop you from enjoying your life. Focus on reducing stress. ✪✪✪✪

SCORPIO (*Oct. 23-Nov. 21*): Don't allow a repeat performance of a disappointing scene from your past. Avoid bailing out someone who has already let you down. It's important to look out for your own interests and to focus on personal gains, not on other people's losses. ✪✪✪

SAGITTARIUS (*Nov. 22-Dec. 21*): Do your best to listen and have patience with those who are confused or unable to sort out their problems. Offer suggestions, but don't take over. Concentrate on your home and improving your standard of living, not on giving cash to others. ✪✪✪

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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CAPRICORN (*Dec. 22-Jan. 19*): Look at the big picture and you'll discover exactly what you should be doing next. You don't have to make a momentous change in order to get ahead. It's the little things you do that will bring the best rewards. ✪✪✪

AQUARIUS (*Jan. 20-Feb. 18*): Make plans for an upcoming event. A change in the way you live or do things will be rewarding. An interesting approach to an old idea will help you find the time to take better care of your health, appearance and financial situation. ✪✪✪✪

PISCES (*Feb. 19-March 20*): Avoid any kind of controversy. You are best to stick to your own tasks and steer clear of gossip, meddling or dealing with institutions or government agencies. Problems while traveling or dealing with partners can be expected. Sit tight. ✪✪

Birthday Baby: You are adventurous, charming and helpful. You are persuasive and reactive.

*Eugenia's website—**eugenialast.com**, Eugenia's android app @ **http://bit.ly/exhoro** and join Eugenia on **twitter/facebook/linkedin**.*

SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku *By Dave Green*

	3	1	8	5	4			
		8			6	3	1	
		9			7			2
	2					8		3
3							4	1
8							6	
	6					5		
		4			9			
			1	6				

Difficulty Level ★★★ 1/06

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Yesterday's SUDOKU Answer

8	2	9	5	6	1	3	4	7
4	5	3	2	7	8	1	6	9
7	1	6	3	9	4	8	2	5
3	6	7	4	2	9	5	8	1
5	8	4	6	1	3	7	9	2
2	9	1	8	5	7	4	3	6
6	7	8	9	3	5	2	1	4
9	4	5	1	8	2	6	7	3
1	3	2	7	4	6	9	5	8

Difficulty Level ★★ 3/6

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WONDERWORD®

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally and even backward. Find them, circle each letter of the word and strike it off the list. The leftover letters spell the WONDERWORD.

DICK VAN PATTEN (1928-2015) Solution: 10 letters

H	E	J	O	S	E	P	H	I	N	E	R	O	S	E
A	G	S	V	R	I	C	H	A	R	D	W	S	R	F
P	A	U	N	I	N	I	B	O	R	I	P	A	O	I
P	T	C	O	I	N	O	T	A	O	B	E	V	O	L
Y	S	E	B	N	A	C	N	U	L	D	I	C	K	F
D	E	P	L	O	E	P	E	N	C	S	U	G	I	O
A	B	O	E	Y	J	S	G	N	A	K	A	S	E	S
Y	A	O	T	N	F	A	I	N	T	C	H	M	S	T
S	I	L	O	A	O	M	I	T	I	Ⓓ	Ⓐ	Ⓓ	I	C
I	C	E	H	B	M	A	A	L	H	W	O	C	N	A
E	I	D	I	N	A	N	C	Y	A	G	O	A	S	F
R	R	U	A	N	E	L	S	E	L	T	I	R	I	I
R	T	A	M	K	R	O	Y	W	E	N	P	E	G	L
A	A	M	A	L	D	A	U	T	H	O	R	E	H	M
S	P	Y	M	M	I	J	A	D	V	O	C	A	T	E

©2016 Universal Uclick www.wonderword.com Download the Wonderword Game App! 1/6

Ace, Advocate, Arnie, Author, Balsam, Banyon, Best, Cannon, Care, Dad, Dick, Dog, Eight Is Enough, Facts of Life, Film, Fish, Growing Pains, Gus, Happy Days, Hotel, I Dream of Jeannie, Insight, Jimmy, Josephine Rose, Love Boat, Mama, Maude, Nancy, Nels, New York, Patricia, Pet, Poole, Richard, Robin, Rookies, Sierra, Stage, Talia, Tim, Tuck, Vincent, WIOU

Yesterday's Answer: Neutral

Treasury 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20 or 21 can be purchased online at www.WonderWordBooks.com. (Contain 130 puzzles.)

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1-Webmaster. $12/hour, minimum 3 years experience. Must be able to manage websites with Korean and Chinese content. Email resume to usptvp@gmail.com before January 12, 2016. US PACIFIC TIMES CORPORATION, P.O. Box 505049, Saipan, MP 96950.

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Tel. (670) 235-7270

Vacancy Announcement

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Submit Applications To:
AYD Services Inc. Tel.# 235-7011

5 Star G Corporation

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AYD Services Inc. Tel.# 235-7011

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1 - **Building Maintenance Repairer** – Install, maintain & repair machinery, equipment, physical structures & pipes & electrical systems in commercial building, using hand tools, power tools, hoist, crane & testing instruments & following specifications, blueprints, manuals & schematic diagrams by visual inspections & tests. Assist other maintenance duties as assigned. Must be high school graduate with 2 years experience. Minimum wage. No benefits. Must have own transportation & able to work broken hours. Must provide police clearance & drug test.

1 - **Commercial Cleaner** – Sweep, mop & vacuum floors, clean glass windows, polish & buff floors, clean & deodorize toilets, dust & polish furniture in offices & other related duties as assigned. Must be high school graduate with 1 year work experience. Minimum wage. No benefits. Must have own transportation & able to work from 06:00 A.M. to 04:00 P.M. Must provide police clearance & drug test.

Interested applicants may contact Fuji Pacific, Inc. at 234-0583 and ask for Nita San Nicolas or fax resume and police clearance to 234-3605.

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Submit applications, police clearance, and copy of certification at G4S Office located at Beach Road Ladera Building, Chalan Lau-lau.
For more information call (670) 233-3238/39 or email at cnmi@gu.g4s.com
www.g4s.mp

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Heat rally from 18 down, top Pacers in overtime

MIAMI (AP)— Chris Bosh and Paul George had a quick conversation during one stoppage in play, both taking a moment to remember some of those epic Miami-Indiana playoff matchups of a few years ago.

"I was joking with PG, just telling him how it was old times," Bosh said.

Sure felt that way for the Heat— as they showed their rivalry with the Pacers still very much matters.

Bosh scored 31 points and grabbed 11 rebounds, Dwyane Wade had 27 including a layup that beat the buzzer and forced overtime, and the Heat erased an 18-point third-quarter deficit to beat the Pacers 103-100 on Monday night.

It was the worst-shooting game of the season for Miami, which connected on 38 percent of its tries and won anyway.

"This was classic Eastern Conference basketball," Heat coach Erik Spoelstra said.

Goran Dragic added 13 for Miami, which matched a season best with its third straight win.

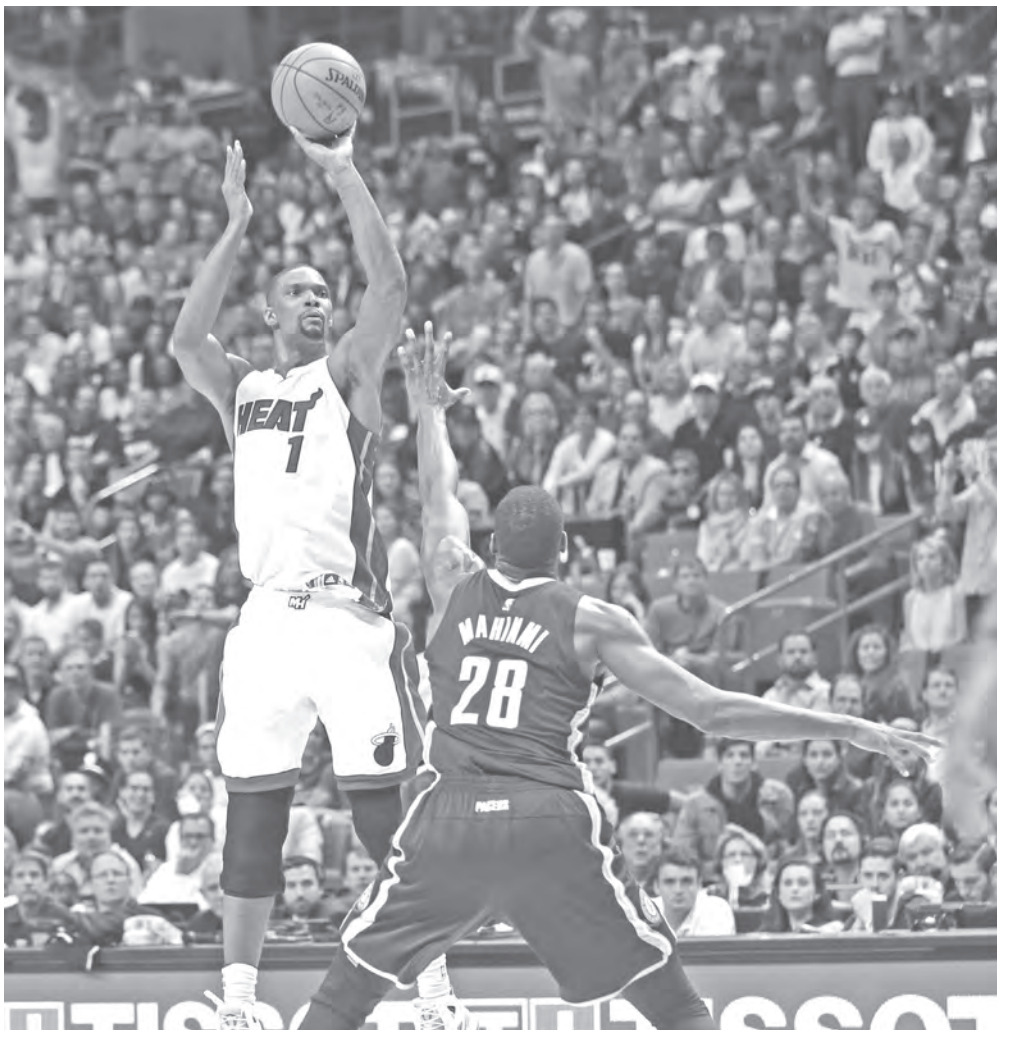
George scored 32 points on 12-for-29 shooting for Indiana, but his 3-pointer from the right corner bounced off the rim on the game's final play. Monta Ellis had 17 points, Ian Mahinmi finished with 13 and Rodney Stuckey scored 12 for the Pacers.

"They're a good team," Pacers coach Frank Vogel said. "They've got two All-Stars that closed the gap. Eighteen points in the third quarter, those deficits get overcome in the NBA all the time."

There was a delay of nearly half an hour at the start because of a lighting malfunction before tip-off, then overtime at the finish. Heat rookie Justise Winslow was among those who needed intravenous fluids after the game because his calves were cramping, but he stayed on the floor until the end.

"Whatever it takes," Spoelstra said.

A pair of offensive rebounds in the final seven seconds helped seal it for Miami. Winslow grabbed one off a miss by Wade and made one free throw, his second being rebounded by Bosh for another Miami trip to the line.



AP

Miami Heat's Chris Bosh (1) shoots over Indiana Pacers' Ian Mahinmi (28) during the second half of an NBA basketball game, Monday, Jan. 4, 2016, in Miami. The Heat defeated the Pacers, 103-100, in overtime.

Warriors 111, Hornets 101

In Oakland, Draymond Green became the second Warriors player ever to post three straight triple-doubles and Golden State rolled to its 35th straight regular-season home win, 111-101 over the Charlotte Hornets on Monday night.

Stephen Curry and Klay Thompson scored 30 points apiece and Marreese Speights had a season-high 15 off the bench to help the Warriors sweep the season series from Charlotte.

But the night belonged to Green, who had 13 points, 15 rebounds and 10 assists to join Tom Gola in 1959-60 as the only Warriors players ever to get triple-doubles in three straight games. The last player in the NBA to do it was Oklahoma City's Russell Westbrook, who had a four-game streak last season.

Kemba Walker and Jeremy Lamb each scored 22 points for the Hornets. Charlotte has lost a season-high four straight games.

Spurs 123, Bucks 98

In Milwaukee, Kawhi Leonard scored 10 of his 24 points in the decisive third quarter and the San Antonio Spurs beat the Milwaukee Bucks 123-98 on Monday night for their fifth straight victory.

The Spurs improved to 30-6 and joined defending champion Golden State as the only teams to reach 30 wins already this season.

Rookie swingman Jonathon Simmons scored a career-high 18 for the Spurs, who set a season high for points two days after posting 121 against Houston. LaMarcus Aldridge had 16 points and 11 rebounds.

Tim Duncan finished with 14 points and 10 boards for the Spurs, one game after going scoreless for the first time in his 19-year career.

San Antonio played without starting point guard Tony Parker due to right hip soreness, but still won its 27th game in the last 31.

Sixers 109, Timberwolves 99

In Philadelphia, Ish Smith had 21 points and 11 assists, and Richaun Holmes scored 17 to lead Philadelphia over Minnesota.

Still the worst team in the NBA at 4-33, the 76ers have won three of six games and have a new confidence since they hired Jerry Colangelo as chairman of basketball operations last month.

Colangelo's first big move was acquiring Smith from New Orleans in a Dec. 24 trade that cost them nothing but second-round draft picks. Smith averaged 13.4 points and 7.6 assists since the deal and has made his teammates better.

Shabazz Muhammad led the Timberwolves with 20 points.

Cavaliers 122, Raptors 100

In Cleveland, Kyrie Irving scored a season-high 25 points, J.R. Smith had 24 on eight 3-pointers and Cleveland defeated Toronto.

Irving, playing his sixth game since returning from a broken left kneecap, was 10 of 16 from the field. The three-time All-Star, injured in Game 1 of last season's NBA Finals, added eight assists and six rebounds.

LeBron James, who didn't play in the fourth quarter, had 20 points and seven assists in 31 minutes. All five Cavaliers starters finished in double figures.

Tristan Thompson added 14 points with 11 rebounds, and Kevin Love scored 14 as Cleveland improved to 15-1 at home.

The Raptors were led by Kyle Lowry's 23 points.

Celtics 103, Nets 94

In New York, Jae Crowder scored a career-high 25 points with a strong start and a clutch finish, and Boston beat Brooklyn to split a home-and-home series.

Crowder had 14 points in the first quarter, then was largely quiet until hitting a 3-pointer and adding a three-point play after Brooklyn got close in the final minutes. He surpassed his previous best of 24 points by making a pair of free throws with 16 seconds remaining.

Isaiah Thomas added 19 points for the Celtics, who rebounded from consecutive losses at home. Evan Turner, starting for injured Avery Bradley, had 12 points and 11 rebounds.

Thaddeus Young had 23 points and a season-high 15 rebounds for the Nets, who have lost seven straight at home. Joe Johnson scored 21 and Brook Lopez, the Eastern Conference player of the week, finished with 19.

Pistons 115, Magic 89

In Auburn Hills, Andre Drummond had 17 points and 12 rebounds, and Detroit rolled to its most lopsided victory of the season.

Detroit led 57-47 at halftime, and although Orlando scored the first seven points of the third quarter, a 16-4 run later in the period gave the Pistons a comfortable advantage again. Detroit then poured it on at the start of the fourth.

Kentavious Caldwell-Pope scored 21 points for the Pistons, and Brandon Jennings added 17. Reggie Jackson scored 14 points with seven assists.

Victor Oladipo, starting in place of injured guard Elfrid Payton, led Orlando with 18 points.

Thunder 116, Kings 104

In Oklahoma City, DeMarcus Cousins had 33 points and a season-high 19 rebounds, and Sacramento took advantage of Kevin Durant's absence to beat Oklahoma City.

Durant missed the game with a sprained right big toe. His status is day to day, but coach Billy Donovan said before the game that he didn't consider it serious.

Rajon Rondo had 13 points, 19 assists and nine rebounds. Marco Belinelli scored 21 points and Rudy Gay added 16 for the Kings.

Rockets 93, Jazz 91

In Salt Lake City, James Harden scored 30 points and Houston rallied in the second half to beat Utah, ending its longest losing streak of the season at four games.

The Jazz led by 15 midway through the third quarter before Harden began to heat up. He scored seven straight points to get the margin down to single digits.

Harden's layup with 1:55 remaining gave the Rockets an 89-87 lead they never relinquished. Rodney Hood had a chance to tie it for the Jazz with 6 seconds remaining but missed the third of three free throws to leave Utah down by one.

Grizzlies 91, Trail Blazers 78

In Portland, Zach Randolph had 26 points and 18 rebounds off the bench, and the Memphis Grizzlies beat the Trail Blazers 91-78 on Monday night to spoil Damian Lillard's return to the Portland lineup.

Lillard missed seven games for the Blazers because of plantar fasciitis in his left foot. The Blazers went 4-3 while he was out, with CJ McCollum sliding over to point guard.

Lillard looked rusty at the start of his return and the Grizzlies took advantage, leading by as many as 20 early in the fourth quarter.

SIDEBAR

Lakers torn on which of Bryant's numbers to retire

LOS ANGELES—Kobe Bryant has enjoyed an illustrious career while wearing two separate jersey numbers and with his final chapter approaching it has left the Los Angeles Lakers with a decision about which one to retire.

"Obviously it's going to be 8, 24 or it could be both," Lakers General Manager Mitch Kupchak said. "I don't know the answer."

Bryant wore number eight from the time he broke into the team in the 1996-97 campaign, won three championships and delivered an unforgettable 81-point performances while wearing it.

He changed to number 24 prior to the 2006-07 season, won two more championships and is wearing it in his 20th, and final, season in the NBA which has been on something of an extended farewell tour.

"This is a year that's dedicated to Kobe and his farewell," Kupchak said. And next year the Lakers will lift one of Bryant's numbers into the arena rafters. Or, two of them.

Meanwhile, Lakers coach Byron Scott says he expects Bryant to play Tuesday night against Denver after sitting out the last game with a sore right shoulder.

Scott says Bryant will arrive at Pepsi Center a little earlier than normal to "get some shots up." He cautioned Bryant not to take too many shots, though, just enough to "see how it feels and to gauge where the pain is, if there's any. But he said he's definitely 100 percent ready to go."

Bryant didn't play in Oklahoma City on Saturday, two days after dunking for the first time this season against Houston.

The 37-year-old Bryant leads the team in scoring at 16.7 points per game. He announced last month he was retiring after the season.

Colts give Pagano, Grigson contract extensions

INDIANAPOLIS (AP)—Chuck Pagano and Ryan Grigson will be paired together for four more years in Indianapolis.

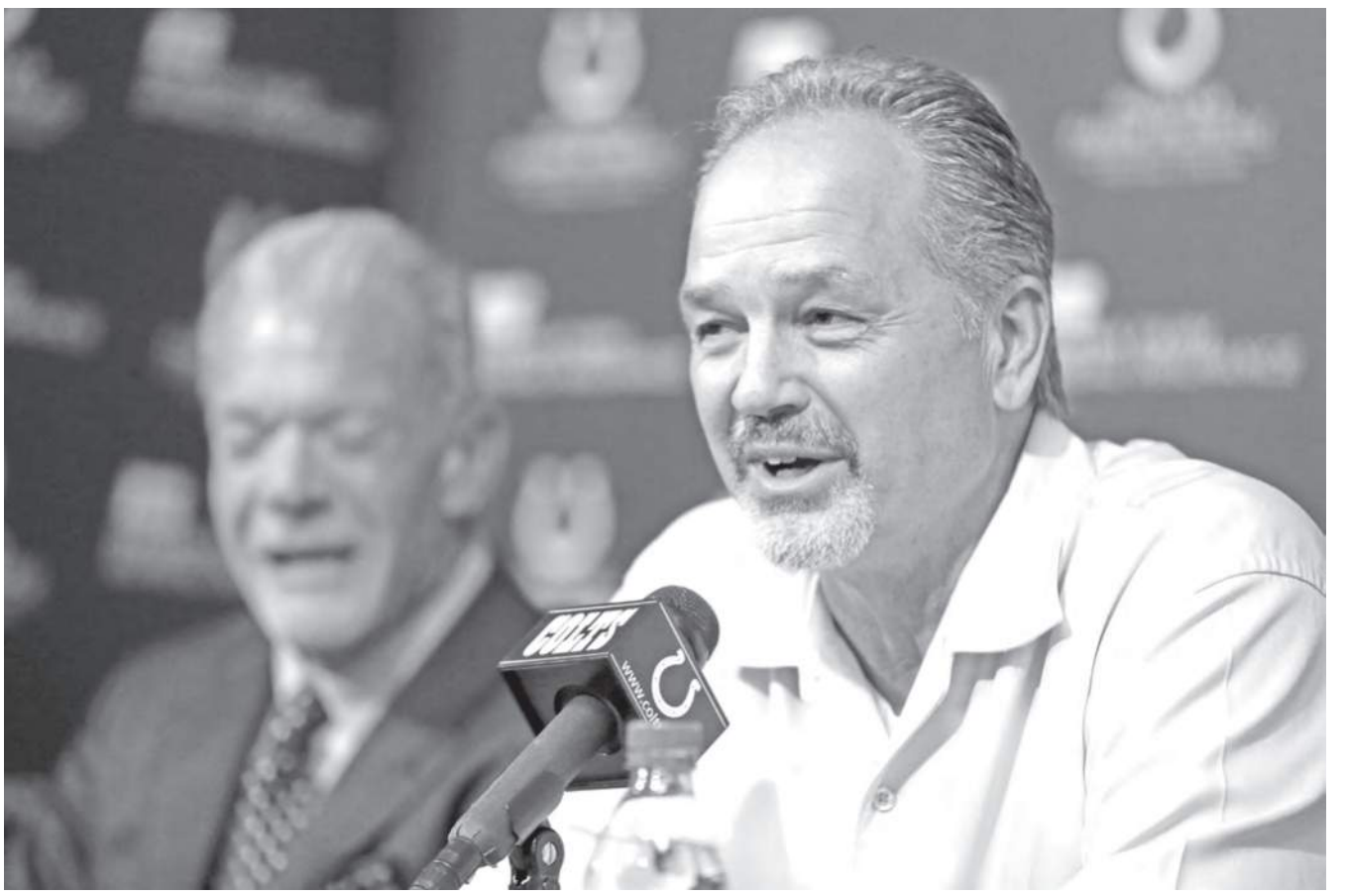
Colts owner Jim Irsay announced at a hastily-called, late-night news conference that he had given his coach and general manager contract extensions.

Pagano, the 55-year-old coach, received a four-year deal to replace the expiring contract that prompted speculation he could be ousted Monday.

Grigson got three-years added to the one year he had on the original deal he signed in 2012.

Financial details were not immediately available.

Pagano led the Colts to the playoffs in his first three seasons in charge, advancing one step further each year, losing in the 2014 AFC championship game. But plagued by injuries, including to star quarterback Andrew Luck, Indianapolis went 8-8 this season as Houston won the AFC South and the decision to keep Pagano will be well-liked in a locker room that was already lobbying to keep Pagano.



AP

Indianapolis Colts head coach Chuck Pagano speaks after the announcement of his contract extension as owner Jim Irsay, left, looks on during a press conference at the NFL team's practice facility in Indianapolis, Monday, Jan. 4, 2016.

"I don't see any reason for change. I think Chuck is the guy for this team to lead us to a Super Bowl," linebacker D'Qwell Jackson said earlier Monday. "You look around the league, all the head coaches that have been around for years, there have been off years. If an off year is 8-8, I know some teams would give their right arm to go 8-8. I don't see a need for change."

Some Colts fans agreed.

As players continued to post their personal sentiments on Twitter, Colts fans adopted the phrase (hash)Chuckstay to show their support. That's a spinoff of the (hash)Chuckstrong tagline that became popular when Pagano was battling leukemia in 2012.

Pagano turned down a one-year contract extension last offseason and gambled he could take Indianapolis to a fourth straight playoff appearance, a third straight division title and their first Super Bowl in six years.

Pagano is 41-23 in four seasons in Indy and has won three playoff games.

But with the injured Luck missing nine games this season and 40-year-old backup Matt Hasselbeck dealing with a myriad of injuries in December and January, the Colts never lived up to the preseason Super Bowl hype.

Pagano's backers largely believe general manager Ryan Grigson, who has one year remaining on his original contract, should be the one to go. They believe Grigson's hits and misses in free agency and the draft were the biggest problem and that Pagano did all he could with the hand he was dealt.

Grigson's supporters have questioned Pagano's ability to get his players to execute. They also pointed to poor play calls, penalties, turnovers and a series of questionable decisions such as the bungled fake punt against New England.

Only one opinion really mattered, though, and that was Irsay's. The extension showed how the owner felt about Pagano's work.

Before players started cleaning out their lockers, Pagano held this season's last team meeting. Players declined to say what specifically was discussed, but many acknowledged Pagano expressed "love" for each of his players.

Chargers, Raiders, Rams file for relocation to Los Angeles

SAN DIEGO (AP)—The San Diego Chargers, Oakland Raiders and St. Louis Rams filed for relocation to the Los Angeles area on Monday night, trying not to be left out in the race to return the NFL to the nation's second-largest market after a 21-year absence.

The Chargers want to partner with the AFC West rival Raiders on a stadium in Carson.

Chargers chairman Dean Spanos has had the right to leave San Diego since 2008, but the team's long, contentious efforts to replace aging Qualcomm Stadium became more aggressive after Rams owner Stan Kroenke announced plans to build a stadium in Inglewood.

The NFL confirmed it received the applications to move for the 2016 season. They will be reviewed by league staff and three committees of owners that will meet in New York on Wednesday and Thursday. All owners will meet in Houston next week and are expected to vote on whether to allow any of the teams to move. A team wanting to move needs 24 of 32 votes.

Los Angeles has been without the NFL since after the 1994 season, when the Raiders moved back to Oakland and the Rams moved to St. Louis. The Rams had been in the L.A. area since 1946.

The Chargers and City Hall have been at odds since 2000, when team owner Alex Spanos said the team needed a new stadium. That was just three years after the stadium was expanded to accommodate the Chargers and Super Bowls.

The stadium saga turned nasty this year as Mark Fabiani, an attorney for Dean Spanos, attacked Mayor Kevin Faulconer and his proposals to keep the team.

In a video posted on the team's web site, Dean Spanos blamed "the inability of the city at the political level to get any kind of public funding or any kind of vote to help subsidize a stadium."

The Chargers' filing came hours after Spanos' son, John, the team's president of football operations, thanked fans for "your unwavering support and passion" in a statement in which he expressed support for beleaguered coach Mike McCoy and general manager Tom Telesco. McCoy will return despite the Chargers going 4-12, their worst record in 12 seasons. Telesco had his contract secretly renewed last summer.

The Raiders and Rams were both 7-9.

The Chargers walked away from negotiations with the city and county in mid-June.

In the three brief negotiating sessions between the Chargers and city and county officials, the team mostly focused on what it called a flawed environmental impact report for a new stadium. The team did not negotiate finances, but it has said in the past that it expects a public contribution of at least 60 percent.

Under the city and county's proposal, public funding would be capped at 32 percent, with the team being responsible for overruns.

The Chargers claim 25 percent of their fan base comes from north of San Diego County, although they've declined to offer proof.

Oakland has expressed interest in building a new stadium for the Raiders at the Coliseum site but has no funding plan as of yet.

The Rams currently have a year-to-year lease with the Edward Jones Dome.

Kroenke has ignored efforts by a St. Louis task force that is proposing a $1.1 billion stadium along the Mississippi River, not far from the Rams' current stadium built in 1995.

Two-time Super Bowl winner Coughlin resigns as Giants coach

EAST RUTHERFORD, N.J. (AP)—With the New York Giants facing a difficult decision on his coaching future after four straight years out of the playoffs, Tom Coughlin walked away gracefully, doing what was best for him.

The Giants gave him 12 years to run one of the NFL's flagship organizations. He delivered two Super Bowls and restored the franchise to the league's elite for a while.

It was mutually beneficial, and so was the departure Monday when the 69-year-old Coughlin resigned rather than force co-owners John Mara and Steve Tisch to fire him.

The Giants announced the decision one day after the Giants (6-10) capped their third straight losing season with a 35-30 defeat against Philadelphia, their third in a row and sixth in seven games.

"I met with (owners) John Mara and Steve Tisch this afternoon, and I informed them that it is in the best interest of the organization that I step down as head coach," Coughlin said in a statement. "I strongly believe the time is right for me and my family, and ... the Giants organization."

The move may signal the end of a 20-year NFL head coaching career for Coughlin, one of 13 coaches to win multiple Super Bowls. It also may not. Coughlin loves to coach and if the right job popped up, who knows?

"It is difficult to come up with words adequate to describe the appreciation we have for everything Tom Coughlin has done for our franchise," Mara said.

"In addition to delivering two Super Bowl titles, Tom represented us with class and dignity, and restored the pride to our entire organization. He has all the qualities you could ever ask for in a head coach, and set very high standards for whoever will succeed him."

Coughlin, Tisch, Mara and general manager Jerry Reese plan to hold a news conference Tuesday morning.

The league's oldest active coach and third-longest tenured among the 32 who finished the season, Coughlin came into 2015 knowing he had to get the Giants back to the postseason to keep his job. It didn't happen because the Giants lost six games either in the final 1:14 of regulation or in overtime.

"Obviously, the past three years have not been what any of us expect, and as head coach, I accept the responsibility for those seasons," he said.

Where the Giants go from here is uncertain. They have traditionally hired from within or gotten someone with NFL coaching experience. A college coach would be a reach, especially a high-profile one who would want too much control.

Offensive coordinator Ben McAdoo, who the Giants and Eli Manning like, might need more seasoning. Defensive coordinator Steve Spagnuolo's unit was last in the league rankings, although he had very little talent on the roster.

Former Falcons coach Mike Smith might be an option, and there are a lot of coordinators around the league who are potential candidates: Bengals offensive coordinator Hue Jackson, Bears OC Adam Gase, Panthers DC Sean McDermott, and the Patriots' Josh McDaniels (offense) and Matt Patricia (defense).

Strong starts for Sonics, Panty Dropper

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
roselyn_monroyo@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Sonics and Panty Droppers had explosive debuts in the 2015 Tan Holdings Christmas Basketball Tournament last Saturday at the Gillette Multipurpose Gymnasium.

The Sonics whipped the Runnin' Rebels, 58-43, in the boys U19 game, while Panty Dropper pounded Chow Time, 57-11, in the women's division pairing to make it to the win column of their respective competitions.

The Panty Dropper poured in 26 unanswered points in the first 14 minutes and change of the game to set up the blowout. Friendly Joy Pena led Panty Dropper's scoring spree, as she fired 12 of their 30 points in the first half.

ROSELYN B. MONROYO
Panty Dropper's Kassie Davis looks for a teammate to pass the ball to as she faces several Chow Time defenders during the first half of their game in the Tan Holdings caging last Saturday at the Gillette Multipurpose Gymnasium.

While Panty Dropper had no troubles burning the hoops and played organized basketball, Chow Time was in disarray on offense, as it clearly lacked the basic skills to keep up with its opponents. Chow Time managed to hit only two field goals in the first 20 minutes of play, breaking its long silence under the six minute mark of the opening half off Candice Avelino's banked shot. Avelino also nailed Chow Time's other field goal in the first half.

In the second half, Panty Dropper continued its domination, drilling one basket after another, while Chow Time was still lost to the point that one of its players pulled up for a shot on their opponent's goal.

Pena top-scored in Panty Dropper's debut win with her 18 points, while lanky center Serafina Rogoyawa contributed 15. Four other Panty Dropper players hit the board for the team, while only four scored for Chow Time.

In the boys U19 division pairing, the Sonics played better in the second half to earn the double-digit winning margin.

The Sonics were up by only one at the end of the first half, 22-21, before it started to gain more cushion in the second as Djay Ong teamed up with Michael Espinosa in providing the needed baskets for their team. Ong, who knocked in 6 of the Sonics' first 8 points, registered 6 straight markers in the second half and added 4 more, while Espinosa tallied 11 of his 13 in the final frame.

Boys U18

Sonics 58 – Ong 16, Espinosa 13, Kintaro 8, Bondoc 7, Tekopua 6, Javier 4, Domingo 2.

Runnin' Rebels 43 – Siech 9, Sablan 7, Hopkins 6, Ngiraroas 6, Jones 4, Florencio 4, Norita 3, Atalig 2.

Scoring by halves: 22-21, 58-43.

Women's

Panty Dropper 57 – Pensa 18, Rogoyawa 15, Garon 7, Davis 6, Lumabi 5, Valino 4, Francisco 2.

Chow Time 11 – C. Avelino 6, Ocampo 2, R. Avelino 2, Francisco 1.

Scoring by halves: 30-4, 57-11.

Spartans roll past Dabarkads in Tuesday B

By JON PEREZ
jon_perez@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Jokers Spartans rolled to an 11-4 win over the VFW Dabarkads to hike their record to 50-25 after last week's games in the Tuesday B division in the Bud Light-Saipan Electronic Darts Association Winter/Spring 2016 season.

Dan Repeki, Melvin Aldan, Stanley Aldan, and Harlan Reyes typified the Spartans' dominating victory over the Dabarkads (32-43), who is at the lower half of the standings in the eight-team field.

Three of the Dabarkads' victories were against the Partners Crazy 8 with Ronald de Ramos teaming up with Ronald Rojas (Partners Crazy Cricket) and Larry Achas (Partners Half-It) in besting the Spartans' Joey Songsong and Steve Igisaiar, and Repeki and Stanley Aldan.

Marvin Achas and Buddy Garote in the Partners 501, and Larry Achas in the Singles Regular Cricket events were the other victories by the Dabarkads.

In other games, Jokers-backed teams 21 Shockers and Northern Lights each scored 9-6 wins over the Doro's Hot Points (34-41) and the Jokers Chamberos (48-27) to improve to similar 43-32 records, while the VFW Warriors (21-54) squeezed out an 8-7 decision against the 6JMS G-Side Shooters (29-46).

There were no games in the Thursday Fanihi and Flame Tree divisions because of the New Year's Eve celebration. Action resumes tomorrow in various bars on Saipan.

A division

- Snipers 12, Hunters 5
- Mafia 11, No Fear 6
- Shockers 11, Sakude 6
- Ridin'Darrty 9, Predators 8

Masters

- Dart Daddies 13, Darteros 4
- Pythons 9, Nakayoshi 8

C division

- Puntan I Langit 10, Mixed Nuts 5
- Spartans 9, Just Dart It 6
- Blue Koi 8, C-Busters 7
- Managaha Boyz 8, Jump It 7

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
The Jokers Spartans pose for a photo after beating the VFW Dabarkads in the Tuesday B division in the Bud Light-Saipan Electronic Darts Association Winter/Spring 2016 season last week.

NMA

From Page 28

"We still have time to conduct the time trials and tryout if we're going to do it at Hopwood. There are still at least three months before the area championships. We will have weekly tryouts in March to April," said Rangamar.

The Northern Marianas Sports Association is trying to get the track resurfaced with the funds coming from a Community Development Block Grant from the Northern Marianas Housing Corp. NMHC will have a pre-bid conference today for the resurfacing project.

Resurfacing of the Oleai track facility is expected to start as soon as the project is awarded to the winning bidder. NMSA and NMHC are looking for a contractor that has the knowledge in making a track facility that would meet international standards to ensure the longevity of the rubber surface.

Meanwhile, this year's MAC will be the fourth edition of the competition. The first one was held in Palau in 2003, while Saipan organized it in 2005, and Guam hosted the final sub regional tournament in 2007.

The Oceania Athletics Association dissolved the sub regional format and combined it with the Oceania Area Championships in 2009 with Griffith University in Gold Coast, Australia as the venue. Samoa (2011), Cairns (2012), French Polynesia (2013) and the Cook Islands (2014) also hosted the OAC. Barlow Park in Cairns, Australia hosted the last OAC in May 2015 after the OAA decided to bring back the sub regional format.

Papeete in Tahiti will host the Polynesian Championships from April 8 to 9, while the Melanesian Championships will be held in Suva, Fiji from July 7 to 9.

NMA is also aiming to bring back the MAC to the CNMI in 2017 or nearly a decade after Saipan hosted the Oceania Athletics Championships in 2008.

MCDONALD'S

From Page 28

by Joe Ayuyu Jr. and Gil Gapor and the latter eventually stole the possession.

Fortunately for Saipan Ice, McDonald's also lost the leather when Michael went for an isolation play and dribbled to his foot, causing the ball to roll out of the baseline, down to the last 25.6 seconds in the game.

Saipan Ice sued for time and when the game resumed, Kaipat again attacked McDonald's defense. He missed, while Olopai collared the offensive rebound, but the Saipan Ice big man overshot his mark. John Santy then gave Saipan Ice another offensive rebound, but he had butterfingers as he lost the ball after one dribble at the baseline when he tried to fake off the defense of McDonald's Sherwin Gaspar.

Clinging to a shaky one-point lead with 12.7 seconds left on the clock, McDonald's used its last timeout before making the inbound play after Santy's error. At the resumption of the match, Saipan Ice opted to give up a quick foul on Michael, who calmly sank the two pressure-packed free throws to bring their lead back to 3, 11.4 seconds remaining in the playoff game.

Saipan Ice then called its last time out to set up for the game-tying basket, which Derrick Rangamar attempted. The former MMA fighter received Olopai's inbound pass at the right key and was up against Gapor and Michael. He faked off the two McDonald's defenders, but Michael and Gapor did not bite to the bait and instead raised their arms to challenge Rangamar's shot. Gapor went on to partially block Rangamar's attempt and there was a scramble for the loose ball after that big defensive stop. The leather rolled down to McDonald's frontcourt with Rangamar, Michael, and Kaipat chasing the ball. Kaipat eventually picked up the ball, but was still at McDonald's court when time expired.

Meanwhile, Tan Holdings took the easier route to the semifinals after leading in the game right at the get-go.

Tan Holdings built a 24-18 advantage at the end of the first quarter behind the 8 points of Elmer Esdrelon and increased the lead as the game progressed with Matt Duenas, Jarret Matsutaro, and Paul Quizon also hitting their targets in the last three periods.

Duenas top-scored for Tan Holdings with his 26 points, while Esdrelon chipped in 21, and Quizon and Matsutaro contributed 14 and 12, respectively.

Meanwhile, MBI/KFC and Commonwealth Utilities Corp. dispute the third semis seat tonight, while Joeten and Docomo square off for the remaining Final Four berth.

First Game

Tan Holdings 100 – Duenas 26, Esdrelon 21, Quizon 14, Matsutaro 12, Macoto 10, Rivera 9, Nonato 4.

Mariana Resort 80 – Manglona 27, Fidelino 26, Francisco 13, Bansil 4, Lacbayo 4, Capuli 3.

Scoring by quarters: 24-18, 48-30, 71-58, 100-80.

Second Game

McDonald's 77 – Mi. Achas 22, J. Achas 21, Mc. Achas 20, Gapor 8, Gaspar 5, Ayuyu 1.

Saipan Ice 74 – Rangamar 25, Kaipat 14, William 14, Santy 11, Olopai 4, Welson 4, Iguel 3.

Scoring by quarters: 22-18, 44-41, 62-57, 77-74.

NMSA

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chief executive officer Eric Saintrond, in an email sent by FISU's Education Department to all member associations, said the program is open to current sports administrators from FISU members or student-athletes in the national or international level.

"This program aims to consolidate international sports cooperation via global networking, as well as the provision of an in-depth insight in the area of sports management, serving as a way of preparation for leadership positions in sports fields," said Saintrond.

FISU can present a maximum of eight candidates who are willing to work on the sports sector upon completion of the study program. The students will get full scholarship, including airfare, tuition, and monthly stipends.

Those who will complete the program will receive the Master of Sports Management degree from SNU.

SNU's Global Sports Management Graduate Program will run the Dream Together Master Program, which starts in late August this year and ends in June 2018.

Students will stay in Korea for 17 months, from August 2016 to December 2017, with the remaining six months to be spent in their home countries to work on their thesis.

World-class experts and scholars, overseas professors, and faculty from Korea will conduct the courses in English.

Saintrond said he is inviting all FISU member associations to submit their candidates to the FISU Education Department at education@fisu.net no later than Feb. 15.

Northern Marianas Sports Association president Michael White also sent out the documents and other requirements to all of its member federations.

FISU has 170 member countries spread out in Africa, America, Asia, Europe, and Oceania associations.

7th Annual Tan Holdings Tennis Classic Winners

PHOTOS By ROSELYN B. MONROYO

From left, men's doubles over 40 champions Donn Dunlop and Nicky Nichols and runners-up Eddie Wu and David Lai of Guam pose with their plaques during the awards ceremony for the 7th Annual Tan Holdings Tennis Classic last month at the Hibiscus Hall of the Fiesta Resort & Spa Saipan.

From left, Guam's Arn Diaz and Raj Rai and his son are joined by mixed doubles over 40 champions Lydia Tan and Ken Imaya during the presentation of awards.

Father and son Randy, left, and Richard Steele, second left, finish runner-up to Clayton Izuka, right, and Alex Park in the men's 3.0 doubles.

From left, runners-up Ami Miyawaki and Megumi Sekiguchi pose with women's 3.0 doubles winners Ayumi Kaga and Keiko Ojima.

A.J. Hudkins, right, and Grace Choi, second left, are all smiles after receiving the mixed doubles 3.0 champions plaques. Also in the photo are runners-up Mayling Colombo, left, and Rintaro Miyawaki.

Men's doubles 4.0 winners Don Castillo and Ronnie Lacbayo and runners-up Vincent Tudela and Steven Goodwin are all smiles after getting their awards.

Jeff Race and Negahr Rastguiy pose for a photo during the awards ceremony for the mixed doubles 5.0. Race ruled the event with Isabel Heras, while Rastguiy and Bobby Cruz placed second.

Women's doubles 4.0 runners-up Mimi Sakano and Ami Tsukagoshi and champions Malika Miyawaki and Conatsu Kaga smile to the camera.

Heat rally from 18 down, top Pacers in overtime

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Colts give Pagano, Grigson contract extensions

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McDonald's, Tan Holdings advance

ROSELYN B. MONROYO
McDonald's McClain Achas drives against Saipan Ice's Derrick Rangamar, left, and Ben Olopai during the fourth quarter of their playoff game in the JP World caging last Monday night at the Gillette Multipurpose Gymnasium.

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
roselyn_monroyo@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

McDonald's and Tan Holdings took the first two semis seats in the 2nd JP World Corp. Customer Appreciation Basketball League following their contrasting wins last Monday night at the Gillette Multipurpose Gymnasium.

Tan Holdings eased past Mariana Resort in the curtain-raiser, 100-80, while McDonald's pulled off a 77-74 victory against Saipan Ice & Water in the nightcap to march into the Final Four. Incidentally, Tan Holdings and McDonald's will battle in the best-of-three semifinals.

McDonald's arranged a semis date with the top-seeded Tan Holdings as the former played steady in the homestretch, relying on Michael Achas' three free throws and a big defensive stop from Gil Gapor to eliminate the feisty Saipan Ice crew.

Michael made his first free charity at the 1:37 mark of the fourth canto to give McDonald's more breathing room, 75-72. Earlier in the last three minutes of the game, Michael's brother McClain broke the last deadlock in the match with a layup against Ben Olopai, 74-72.

A daredevil basket from Treat Kaipat moved Saipan Ice within one, 74-75, and they had a chance to grab the lead after McClain was called for a traveling violation in the ensuing play. However, Saipan Ice turned the ball over as Derrick Rangamar was double teamed

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NMA to hold time trials for area championships

By JON PEREZ
jon_perez@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Northern Marianas Athletics will be holding time trials in March for the CNMI team that will compete in this year's Micronesian Area Championships set from June 22 to 24 in Pohnpei.

NMA official and national team coach Elias Rangamar will be supervising the time trials.

Rangamar said he is hoping that resurfacing of the Oleai track facility would be done when NMA starts the series of tryouts. The Hopwood Junior High School field is a back up venue if repairs at the Oleai track oval are not yet done.

"Hopefully, resurfacing is done early this year so we could hold time trials at the Oleai track. If not, then Hopwood is our next option. We need to ask permission from Hopwood principal Jonas Barcinas if we could use their field," said Rangamar in an interview with *Saipan Tribune* yesterday.

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JON PEREZ
Zarinae Sapong, left, and Rachel Abrams, seen here getting ready to train, have suited up for the CNMI in various Oceania regional championships. The Northern Marianas Athletics will conduct time trials for the CNMI team that will compete in the Micronesian Area Championships this year.

NMSA gets scholarship opportunity invites

By JON PEREZ
jon_perez@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The International University Sports Federation where Northern Marianas Sports Association is a member is inviting countries from five associations to submit their nominees for a new scholarship opportunity—the 2016 Dream Together Master Program offered by the Seoul National University.

The Korean Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, and the Korea Foundation for the Next Generation Sports Talent jointly funded the program in cooperation with SNU, which is ranked 31st in the world and third in Asia based on the latest QS World University rankings.

FISU secretary general and

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JON PEREZ
A football coach conducts drills during a clinic for young players in this file photo taken at the Oleai Sports Complex Field last year. CNMI's sports administrators or student-athletes are invited to apply for a scholarship opportunity with FISU and Seoul National University.